

Permanent Offense

*The Weekly Standard Magazine and U.S.
Foreign Policy 1995-2005*

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Title: Permanent Offense: The Weekly Standard Magazine and U.S. Foreign Policy 1995-2005

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Description of Thesis

This thesis examines the conservative American magazine the *Weekly Standard*, through its first ten years, from 1995 until 2005. The emphasis is in the area of foreign policy, an area where the magazine wielded considerable influence during the George W. Bush administration. The primary sources are a large number of representative writing from the *Weekly Standard*, along with writers from other magazines, as well as memoirs from main actors of the Bush administration. The sources beyond the magazine show the larger context in which the *Weekly Standard* took part, and how the magazine responded to government policies.

The *Weekly Standard* has since its beginning been associated with the political persuasion of neoconservatism. This study looks at the history of neoconservatism, as well as the links between the writings of the magazine, and the earlier generations of neoconservatives. It then analyzes the developments in the most important areas of foreign policy covered by the *Standard*: military interventions, Iraq, Afghanistan, and terrorism.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The essence of American studies is to understand the culture in the North-American countries, both how it developed, and where it is today. When asked by outsiders what American Studies was all about, the author of this thesis explained how a society or a culture was like a diamond with a number of facets, like history, politics, economics, literature etc., all with its own infinite patterns, but also parts of a whole. While most other disciplines looked at one facet, American Studies was equally interested in the whole and how the facets related to each other. There are also more established people in the field that seem to agree with this conception, like Professor of American Studies Jay Gurian who argued how “the unique and important contribution of American Studies is demonstrating that ideas have consequences which can best be understood through their interconnections. If we have a 'method' it is the approach to ideas and consequences in the round—a total approach...”¹

In the United States of America, a nation founded in a conscious effort by well-read men, and seeking its legitimacy in a set of novel ideas, ideas seemed to have had consequences throughout its history. So with this in mind the author have had a particular interest for the American history of political ideas. Ideas articulated by politicians, scholars and intellectuals, but directed at governing; at linking policies to vision.

Neoconservatism is one of the many ideas that have influenced American policies. Especially the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration seemed to be thought of by its many critics as largely defined by neoconservative ideas. Unfortunately since neoconservatism lacked a membership organization, or even a manifesto, a lot of the depictions of the neoconservative way of thought seemed based on assumptions. David Brooks, a former contributor to the *Weekly Standard*, quipped that if you ever see a sentence that starts with ‘neocons believe,’ there is a 99.44 percent chance everything else in that sentence will be untrue.² A lot of what has been written concerning neoconservatism has been strongly

¹ Jay Gurian, “American Studies and the Creative Present.” *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* (Spring 1969) : <https://journals.ku.edu/index.php/amerstud/article/viewFile/2151/2110> (accessed 11.04.2012)

² Irwin Stelzer (ed.), *Neoconservatism* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), 42

politicized, or prone to a simplified narrative centered on the philosopher Leo Strauss.³ This emphasis led the self-professed ex-neoconservative Francis Fukuyama to state that “more nonsense has been written about Leo Strauss and the Iraq war than on virtually any other subject.”⁴

As far as this author have been able to find, only the French historian Justin Vaïsse has written a non-polemic, substantive academic work on the general influence of the neoconservatives in recent decades. To find a field that is often talked about, yet not ‘studied to death,’ is a rare thing. It was clear to me that a clearly influential magazine like the *Weekly Standard*, having been published on a weekly basis since 1995, should be written about academically.⁵ This thesis is a beginning.

My initial goal was to analyze an aspect of the neoconservative intellectual movement with a minimum of preconceptions. I also wanted to look at how ideas and political / historical developments interconnected over a period of time. Since foreign policy in later years have been seen as the most important, and controversial, aspect of the movement in later years, it seemed a natural choice. The prospect of writing a thesis on the magazine the *Weekly Standard* seemed tempting. It was, along with *Commentary*, seen as *the* neoconservative opinion magazine, but unlike *Commentary* in recent years it was also well known outside neoconservative circles. Also, a magazine being “always a date, ‘an issue,’ a moment,” as literary critic Alfred Kazin once wrote, it captured the interconnections between ideas and history in a most effective way.⁶ The challenge of the project was how a magazine consists of a wide number of contributors, writing a massive amount of articles. Secondly since nobody, as far as this author has discovered, have ever written an academic article, a thesis, or a book on the magazine, I would have to navigate the primary sources - the magazine articles - from scratch. In addition, no magazine exists in a vacuum, but is part of a larger discourse.

The part of the writings of the *Weekly Standard* I have chosen as topic for this thesis, is the area of foreign policy. Within foreign policy I have emphasized the most important aspects during these years. These are military interventions, the War on Terror and the War in

³ For examples see: C. Bradley Thompson and Yaron Brook, *Neoconservatism: An Obituary for an Idea* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010), or Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005)

⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 21

⁵ As I write this text (11.05.2012) the well known political net portal www.RealClearPolitics.com have had a different *Weekly Standard* article listed every day the last three days

⁶ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), x

Iraq. This means there will be little or no mention of large subjects like China, Russia, Israel, Europe, Africa, and Latin-America, unless it is related to the thesis.

The objective of this thesis is to portray how the *Weekly Standard* developed its arguments and ideas from the beginning in 1995, until its ten years anniversary in 2005. In these ten years the magazine formulated a set of policies during the Clinton administration, and commented on what was to be the execution of many of these policies during the Bush administration. By 2005, when Bush had been reelected and the first democratic election had taken place in Iraq, the arguments made by the *Standard* had matured, and the reader of this thesis should have no problem inferring what positions the magazine took in the debates not covered, like the surge in Iraq, the strategy for Afghanistan, and even contemporary ones like how to react to the ‘Arab Spring.’ The increasing relevance of the web site as an important and partially self-sustained part of the *Weekly Standard* also makes the ten year anniversary a suitable place to stop. The thesis will also portray the influence the magazine had, if any, on the Bush administration’s policies. Influence is a very tricky thing to prove, but as the striving for influence is an essential premise for a political opinion magazine like the *Weekly Standard*, it should be covered.

It would have been interesting to use another conservative magazine like *National Review* as a comparison, these magazines being two pillars of the Republican ‘elite’ discourse, but unfortunately their digital archive did not go as far back as what was needed. Instead I have mostly looked at relevant articles in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine, which is regarded as perhaps the most influential intellectual foreign policy magazine in the U.S. *Foreign Affairs* being representative of the ‘mainstream’ discourse, I see how the main arguments and priorities of the *Standard* correlates or diverges from this. To get a grasp on the discussions within the Bush administration I have used the memoirs of the main actors within the administrations and the four books by journalist Bob Woodward where he uses extensive interviews to construct a month-by month narrative of the most important foreign policy discussions. Someone once said of Henry Kissinger’s autobiography, that it was excellent, but best read as a novel. The same can be said of Woodward’s books, but as a way of anchoring debates within the administration chronologically, and portraying the main arguments of each side in each debate, they are excellent. The five memoirs provided both a corrective to Woodward, and a deepening of each main actor’s rationale and broader thinking. In the *Weekly Standard* I have read more than 1,200 articles relevant for the thesis between September 1995 and September 2005. Only a fraction of this number is referenced in the

thesis, and if the body of text had been strongly divergent in opinion this thesis could never have been written. Luckily the texts on foreign policy have been surprisingly homogenous when it comes to the broader ideas and concepts. Because of this it was possible to construct a narrative on how the *Weekly Standard* developed its thinking about challenges to U.S. interests.

The thesis is structured into four main parts. Chapter Two provides a context for the thesis. It describes various influential ways of approaching foreign policy that exists within the American discourse, which will be useful when placing the magazine within the broader discourse. The chapter also gives a history of the neoconservative intellectual movement, and its main actors, from after the Second World War until the founding of the *Weekly Standard*. Chapter Three portrays the first years during the Clinton administration, when the magazine was new and had no influence within the party holding the White House. In these years of ‘strategic pause’ after the end of the Cold War, and until 9/11, the *Standard* sought to influence the Republican debate, while also honing its own arguments and style. In editor William Kristol’s words, the magazine sought to report in detail on government and politics, but also keep in mind a broad cultural and political perspective.⁷ I hope I have managed to convey properly how the writings on policy and events were tied to this broader argument concerning ideas and culture. Chapter Four starts with the beginning of the George W. Bush administration, and shows how the magazine reacted to, and interacted with the War on Terror. Like Chapter Three this chapter is divided into topics that portray the various aspects of how the *Weekly Standard* covered the War on Terror and the war in Afghanistan. Its strong concern for ideas defined how the magazine approached this new grand strategy. Chapter Five covers the War in Iraq and is structured chronologically. With this chapter I wish to portray both the magazines vision, and its reaction to developments within Iraq and to administration policies. The chapter covers the period from before the invasion until the aftermath of the first national assembly election in 2005.

Historiography

There is a rich historiography on neoconservatism. Yet what distinguishes it from the works on other strands of the conservative tradition, such as Religious Conservatism or Libertarianism, is that a disproportionate number of the works are highly politicized, and polemic in style. There may be several reasons for this, but one that this author finds

⁷ E-mail correspondance with William Kristol 4/23/2012

persuasive is Irving Kristol's analysis that "neoconservatism is what the late historian of Jacksonian America, Marvin Meyers, called a 'persuasion,' one that manifests itself over time, but erratically, and one whose meaning we clearly glimpse only in retrospect."⁸ Its erratic quality seems to have led scholars to pronounce the death of neoconservatism at the end of each chapter, and to dissuade some of them to spend time and energy for a serious study.

In his influential book *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* (1976), the historian George Nash included the Straussians ("the virtuous people") in his work, but did not emphasize the broader neoconservative movement until his 1996 edition.⁹ The term itself was coined by the politician Michael Harrington in a 1973 article in the journal *Dissent*, and eagerly adopted by Irving Kristol who in his 1978 essay collection "Two Cheers for Capitalism" used the label himself.¹⁰ In 1979 the historian Peter Steinfeld used "The Neoconservatives" as a title to describe thinkers like Kristol, Daniel Bell, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and portrayed their influence on American politics in critical terms.¹¹ Yet even as the book was published Bell and Moynihan were in the phase of distancing themselves from the neoconservative movement.

The difference between Bell and Kristol had been one of temper. In his influential book *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976), Bell was concerned about the way capitalism undermined the cultural virtues that sustained the system, and took a dim view of the future. In his argument capitalism was seen as purely instrumental, but rested on certain conservative virtues that clashed with the culture of postmodernism that capitalism promoted.¹² Irving Kristol on the other hand held a consistently more positive view, and provided a cultural defense of capitalism in his 1978 collection. In his next collection, *Reflections of a Neoconservative* (1983), Kristol presented the full scope of what had become neoconservatism in the 1980s: cultural defense of capitalism, a hawkish and idealistic foreign policy, and an interest in Jewish issues and identity.¹³ His persuasion and interests were shared by most writers in the magazine *Commentary* which was edited by Norman Podhoretz. In *Running Commentary* (2010), the journalist Benjamin Balint wrote a substantial biography of the magazine, and its movement towards neoconservatism. Other notable intellectuals writing on the connections between morality, capitalism and the welfare state were James Q.

⁸ Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion." *The Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003, 23

⁹ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008), 507-31

¹⁰ Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), ix

¹¹ Brandon High, "The Recent Historiography of American Neoconservatism." *The Historical Journal*, 52, 2, 2009, 475

¹² Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1996)

¹³ Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)

Wilson, and Gertrude Himmelfarb. Wilson began with an interest in criminology, and was a co-creator of the influential “broken windows theory” in 1982. From the late 1980s he began to focus on traditional morals and virtue as a secular goal in upholding society.¹⁴ Gertrude Himmelfarb main concern was linking the English enlightenment, and the later developments of Victorian morals, to modern society. A culmination of her interest is found in *The Demoralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values* (1995).¹⁵ Some of the same themes can be found in the writings of David Brooks, a frequent contributor to the *Weekly Standard*, where he commented the development of modern culture and American identity. He is also the author of numerous books, most notably *Bobos In Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (2001), which analyzes the cultural consequences of the information age.¹⁶

With the founding of the *Weekly Standard* magazine, a new generation of neoconservatives created a medium to influence policy, both domestically and foreign policy. In the realm of foreign policy the anthology *Present Dangers*, (2000) edited by Robert Kagan and William Kristol, presented a wide selection of neoconservative writers laying out an ambitious foreign policy agenda.¹⁷ Robert Kagan went on to write a number of influential books like *Of Paradise and Power* (2003), which described the foreign policy split between the U.S. and Europe in cultural terms; *Dangerous Nation* (2006), a neoconservative reinterpretation of U.S. foreign policy from the revolution to the Spanish-American War; and *The World America Made* (2012), which according to *The New York Times* made a great impression on President Barack Obama.¹⁸

The renewed influence of neoconservatives gave rise to a number of polemical book criticizing the movement, like political scientists Francis Fukuyama’s *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy* (2006), and Andrew Bacevich’s *The New American Militarism* (2006), both written from the viewpoint of earlier sympathizers disillusioned by the war in Iraq.¹⁹ Another notable book is Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke’s “America Alone” (2004) that criticizes the movement from a Realist and

¹⁴ James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: The Free Press, 1993)

¹⁵ Gertrude Himmelfarb, “The De-moralization of Society (London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1995)

¹⁶ Amazon.com editorial review : http://www.amazon.com/Bobos-Paradise-Upper-Class-There/dp/0684853787/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352312227&sr=1-3&keywords=david+brooks (accessed 11.06.2012)

¹⁷ Robert Kagan and William Kristol (ed.), *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000)

¹⁸ Robert Kagan, *Paradise & Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004). *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006). / Michiko Kakutani, “Historian Who Influences Both Obama and Romney.” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2012. : http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/14/books/the-world-america-made-by-robert-kagan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed 11.06.2012)

¹⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)

Libertarian perspective.²⁰ These books, while highly critical, are serious academic works. More polemical and less academically strong are Anne Norton's "Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire" (2005), Patrick Buchanan's "Where the Right Went Wrong: How Neoconservatives Subverted the Reagan Revolution and Hijacked the Bush Presidency," (2005). These books belong in a tradition that regards neoconservatism more or less as a Zionist conspiracy with an uncanny power to influence people in high political positions. In this thesis I have used Fukuyama and Halper, but avoided, with the exception of Anne Norton, spending time on works I have regarded to be in the latter tradition. A notable departure from the polemic writing on the neoconservative intellectual movement was French historian Justin Vaïsse's comprehensive "Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement" (2010). As far as I have discovered there are as of this time no books or notable academic articles that focuses on the *Weekly Standard* magazine.

²⁰ Brandon High, "The Recent Historiography of American Neoconservatism." *The Historical Journal*, 52, 2, 2009, 476

Chapter Two

A History of Ideas and Neocons

Foreign Policy Traditions in America

The writings of the *Weekly Standard* are grounded in a foreign policy consensus. While the magazine tries to influence readers and project new ideas, to be relevant it has to do so within the framework of U.S. ideology. Ideas have always played a major role in U.S. foreign policy thinking and the main pillars of current American foreign policy thinking are grounded in old ideas, or schools of foreign policy. Henry Kissinger quips that “America’s journey through international politics has been a triumph of faith over experience.”¹ Yet he argues that ideas became central to U.S. behavior because the American Revolution was partly a rebellion against the systems and values of Europe.² The initial U.S. stance of internal expansion and external isolationism combined with moral indignation is identified with Thomas Jefferson. This philosophy eventually collapsed under the strain of its contradictions, because as American wealth, power and influence grew it became increasingly harder to separate a basically amoral fulfillment of “Manifest Destiny” from a moral foreign policy.

For Kissinger the two main directions of modern U.S. foreign policy are manifested by two Presidents who brought America into the global spotlight, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt insisted that it was America’s duty to project its influence, but as a nation like any other, defending its interests.³ He argued how great powers had natural spheres of interests, which for the U.S. consisted of the Western Hemisphere. He doubted the efficiency of international law and resisted the disarmament movement. Yet apart from giving the Monroe Doctrine teeth with his Corollary, establishing the right to exclusive intervention as a natural consequence, he failed to move American attitudes sufficiently.⁴ As the European power system unraveled in the beginning of the 20th Century, the United States watched passively.

Ironically it was a diametrically opposite philosophy that managed to put America in the center of global politics. While Roosevelt saw a German victory as a threat to America’s security, Wilson saw the U.S. as disinterested and thus in a position to end the war and

¹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 18

² Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 32

³ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 38

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 43

mediate the peace.⁵ Beginning his administration with the Jeffersonian William Jennings Bryan as Secretary of State, Wilson firmly attached himself to the idealist tradition. But Bryan's traditional conception of the U.S. role was for Wilson a thing of the past. Having kept its innocence intact it was now time for the U.S. to create "peace without victory", and in the process make the world safe for democracy.⁶ He attempted to make the League of Nations to become a global policing unit with its legitimacy resting in a worldwide consensus. Yet he did not win over the American public, and his treaty failed in the Senate. Because of its strong Jeffersonian current combined with an all-or-nothing campaign from the President, the U.S. refused to enter the framework it had worked to establish. Even so Kissinger concludes that "for three generations, critics have savaged Wilson's analysis and conclusions; and yet in all this time, Wilson's principles have remained the bedrock of American foreign-policy thinking."⁷ For nearly all Americans there is something in the Wilsonian creed that speaks to their soul, Kissinger argues, and includes himself within that group. Robert Kagan draws the line back to Lincoln's argument about the Declaration of Independence being the central idea of the American nation.⁸ For him the core of the American nation is set in a universal principle of equal rights that transcend any national border. But rather than striving for a "peace without victory" the Republicans wanted an unconditional surrender, the war being about the people of the South as well as their armies. Walter Russell Mead sees in the Wilsonian soul a conviction that it is America's business what happens inside other countries and their right to fix it.⁹ He emphasizes the missionary tradition which abounds in American history.¹⁰ Ever since the Second Awakening people have travelled outside in great numbers to spread Christianity and civilization to more unfortunate parts of the world. Kagan on the other hand thinks it is unnatural to see them as a separate phenomenon and argues that they are a part of a general conviction that Americans should spread the benefits of civilization, which for them was grounded in commerce, Christianity and republican government.¹¹

Mead uses a more sophisticated model than Kissinger, but sticks to many of the same elements. On one hand he presents a Hamiltonian viewpoint and a Wilsonian. Both these are well known and applied in world politics in general. The other two schools are more intimately tied to elements in American culture and are less liked and understood abroad. The

⁵ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 45

⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 49

⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 52

⁸ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 262

⁹ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 138

¹⁰ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 140

¹¹ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 155

Hamiltonian school is centered on a trade-oriented foreign policy.¹² A politician of this school will see trade as beneficial for everyone, while war is at best a zero-sum game. While the old European statesmen concerned themselves with matters of war, the American diplomat was primarily concerned with trade. Yet there is an iron fist inside the velvet glove as the Hamiltonian view dictates that American citizens, goods and ships should get to travel wherever they want. Even as a weak Republic the U.S. used its military to ensure the freedom of the seas against European and North African interests, and this behavior has continued ever since. Most of the European empires as well as early 20th century Japan were oriented towards mercantilism, the system where trade is a mere instrument to fulfill the goals of the state. The exception was Britain which promoted free trade even without receiving equal benefits, a position that the U.S. took over after the Second World War. Hamiltonian thinking is hostile to colonies, which promotes mercantilist behavior, yet is open to force a country to accept the joys of free trade. For a Hamiltonian this is for the good of everyone as commerce is the road to peace and prosperity.¹³ The struggle for access can result in behavior which would look old fashioned European for anyone not American. When the Spanish empire finally collapsed in the late 19th Century, the U.S. preemptively filled the vacuum. They reluctantly made the Philippines a colony in order to preempt a European power from doing so, which in President McKinley's words would simply be "bad business."¹⁴

For the Jeffersonian school this is heresy. Their vision of the U.S. is of a country that sticks to its original creed of developing freedom and democracy at home, and does not get entangled in the affairs of others.¹⁵ The core of this ideology is encapsulated in President John Quincy Adams' 1821 Independence Day speech where he states America "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy," being "the wellwisher to the freedom and independence of all," but the "champion and vindicator only of her own."¹⁶ If America gets too involved in the world of interest and intrigue "the fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force." This rhetoric of restraint in foreign policy was accompanied by a severe critique of the authoritarian regimes of Europe, and an aggressive diplomacy regarding Latin-American independence based on republicanism and defended by natural right.¹⁷ Yet while agreeing wholeheartedly how other countries should be more like America, the Jeffersonians are against international organizations affecting U.S. autonomy. The sentiments

¹² Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 103

¹³ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 128

¹⁴ <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5575/>

¹⁵ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 175

¹⁶ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 162

¹⁷ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 165

of Adams' has echoed through American history, and articulated through Senator William Borah's opposition to the League of Nations, President Eisenhower's misgivings about the Cold War's effects and Congressman Ron Paul's message of strict adherence to the Constitution.

The final foreign policy school in Mead's model is the Jacksonian school. Jacksonians share with Jeffersonians a skepticism towards expansionist elites, but are more likely to understand federal power used for improving national security by actions at home or abroad.¹⁸ They are also as skeptical about international organizations, but for Jacksonians this extends to an impatience with the give and take of diplomacy in general. Jacksonians view some corruption in government as inevitable, and are more worried of institutions being perverted by bankers, Marxists or other elite representatives.¹⁹ They want a leader who they feel are on their side, who thinks and speaks like a regular guy. President George W. Bush famous statement "I'm not a textbook player, I'm a gut player" indicates a leader in touch with his Jacksonian side.²⁰ Reagan also mastered the Jacksonian aspect of statesmanship and was always forgiven for his transgressions. Mead writes how Jacksonian political philosophy is often an instinct rather than an ideology; a set of beliefs and emotions that may not have been worked out intellectually.²¹

Often associated with the views of uneducated men, Jacksonian thinking is highly present among the American political elite as well. Be it National Security Advisor Steve Hadley's advice to George W. Bush to trust his instincts, or various descriptions of Reagan's great vision which Reagan biographer (and *Weekly Standard* contributor) attributes to discovery rather than deduction, centered on one central idea, that unlimited government is inimical to liberty.²² Jacksonians are not really interested in saving the world, but if they see a clear threat to the nation, be it a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Soviet Eurasian dominance or terrorists attacking America, they are willing to tolerate enormous personal and financial sacrifices.²³

Finally we have a possible Straussian school of foreign policy thought. While this school of thought is not a widely recognized as applying to foreign policy, some scholars including Shadia Drury and Anne Norton argue that it does indeed. Drury argues how a

¹⁸ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 225

¹⁹ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 239

²⁰ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 11

²¹ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 244

²² Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 11 / Steven Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Conservative Counterrevolution 1980-1989* (New York: Crown Forum, 2009), 3

²³ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 247

central theme in Straussian thinking is a divide between the wise, the gentlemen and the masses.²⁴ The wise have the ability to look into the abyss and make the tough choices regardless of moral. The gentlemen are lovers of honor and glory and are prone to uphold the conventions of society. The masses are concerned about pleasure and are prone to fear. The ideal society then is a society governed by the wise, through the gentlemen who proclaim a “noble lie,” often using fear, in order to move the masses in the right direction. Drury scoffs at the idea of Strauss being a proponent of liberal democracy as an admirer of Nietzsche and Plato, as well as a student of the German legal philosopher Carl Schmitt, is prone to anti-liberal sentiments which she clearly sees in his writings. The ancient philosophers Strauss relied upon “believed the unwashed masses were not fit for either truth or liberty,” but how Drury can link Strauss to Nietzsche is unclear. The connection to Schmitt is interesting because he spent two years as a sort of constitutionalist for the Third Reich, although writing to prevent their rise during the Weimar period. For Schmitt the commitment required by any political community is the thing that lifts humans from the worst of animals to the best, but he never discusses what kind of political community that is morally good.²⁵

In a sense Strauss’ tension with liberal democracy is correct. Strauss witnessed the fall of the Weimar republic which made a lasting impact. In a 1932 commentary to Schmitt he agrees how liberalism has negated or veiled the political without having managed to end the yearning for the political.²⁶ According to Strauss the West is in constant danger of losing the deep philosophic grounding for the liberal framework and renounce the importance of a virtuous way of life, but religion and ideologues still promote claims about the nature of the good life.²⁷ The liberal emphasis on rights ultimately alienates man, and drains the substance from the political sphere, which for classical philosophy was the noblest place to aspire to.²⁸ The values of enlightenment declares truth to set you free, but for Strauss truth also eroded tradition and religion which helped to keep popular passions in check through the common sense of ordinary men and women.²⁹ A state should nurture and promote the virtuous life as all societies need a consensus which provides a will to survive and defend against those who fundamentally challenge their core values.³⁰ Liberalism on the other hand postulates that since people disagree about the best way to live, a state should not affirm in law any vision of the

²⁴ <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5010.htm>

²⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Begrepet om det politiske* (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2007), 11

²⁶ Carl Schmitt, *Begrepet om det politiske* (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2007), 138

²⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 22

²⁸ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008), 348

²⁹ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 8

³⁰ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008), 356

good life, but rather create a framework of rights that makes people capable of choosing their own values and goals.³¹ Strauss regards Thomas Hobbes as the last great philosopher to function face to face with the state of nature with his emphasis on survival as the reason to be for the state.³² Liberalism functions within culture and perilously forgets the state of nature, presuming it has found a deeper historical insight. It would be natural to assume a Straussian foreign policy would be one that does not shy away from existential threats, but rather seeks them out since it reminds people there is an alternative to the liberal society.

Robert Kagan seems to embody this view when he argues how Europe lives within the Kantian post-historical paradise, while the U.S. stands with one foot within this sphere, but the other planted in the Hobbesian state of nature where might makes right. America's commitment to liberal values makes this paradise possible in large parts of the world, but the U.S. cannot enter itself, it remains stuck in history defending post-history from its would-be destroyers.³³ Yet Kagan denies being influenced by Strauss. In his *Weekly Standard* article *I Am Not a Straussian: At least, I don't think I am* he claims to "...have long admired the work of Allan Bloom, Harry Jaffa, Harvey Mansfield, and Thomas Pangle--though not, I must say, Leo Strauss himself, since I have never understood a word the political philosopher wrote. I mean not a single word. Nor have I been very good at understanding his disciples."³⁴ Critics of Straussian thinking will not be deterred by this as it just shows the semi-hidden network amongst Straussians.

There is no way to ignore the alleged cabbalistic (a term used frequently by anti-Straussians, meaning a small group of secret plotters) aspect of Straussianism as "[t]he effect of Strauss's teaching is to convince his acolytes that they are the natural ruling elite and the persecuted few." The combination of hidden truth and tight networks results in a strong emphasis on teacher-student relationships: Strauss taught Irving Kristol, Harry Jaffa and Allan Bloom.³⁵ Jaffa taught Harvey Mansfield, who taught Francis Fukuyama and William Kristol.³⁶ Strauss became a friend with Albert Wohlstetter, who along with Bloom taught Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle etc.³⁷ Writings on presumably Straussian neocons often reads as biblical lineages in its complexity, but its recurrence shows a lot of scholars find it an essential part of Straussianism in practice.

³¹ Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 4

³² Carl Schmitt, *Begrepet om det politiske* (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2007), 145

³³ Robert Kagan, *Paradise & Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004)

³⁴ *The Weekly Standard*, February 6, 2006

³⁵ John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Why America is Different* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 74

³⁶ Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 9

³⁷ Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 61

Although there are people intellectually inspired by Leo Strauss that are defined as neoconservative Strauss is not the sole intellectual inspiration. Political scientist Stefan Halper notes that some contemporary neoconservatives do not know who Strauss is.³⁸

Neoconservatism seems to be an intellectual movement broader than Straussian thought, but how broad is it? Is it just an artificial label used to describe foreign policy hawks who can quote Thucydides, or is it a group with a distinct and identifiable outlook? To get a grip of neoconservatism it is useful to trace its roots and development during the Cold War, which created and sustained it.

A Brief History of Neoconservatism

The French historian Justin Vaïsse divides neoconservatism into three distinct ages.³⁹ The first age was a reaction amongst intellectual New York liberals against the evolution of liberalism in the 1960s. The second age in the early 1970s recruited disillusioned Democratic activists and Washington insiders horrified about the nomination of George McGovern for President. The third age began to appear in the late 1980s and consisted of a new generation who had always been Republicans, but whose views differed from the Republican rank and file.

The first generation of neoconservatives consisted of ambitious educated men (and a few women) from poor Jewish families.⁴⁰ They saw themselves as intellectuals and wanted to write about society and literature. Then in 1945 the American Jewish Committee wanted to establish a new magazine based on the Jewish-American experience, but accessible to a broader American audience, highlighting the vitality of contemporary Jewish culture.⁴¹ Benjamin Cohen got the job as editor for the neutrally named *Commentary* and instantly recruited his network of young hungry writers willing to work hard for low pay. Among the frequent contributors were Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer as well as the older Lionel Trilling.

Also in the late 1940s the American Communist Party attempted to woo the intellectual left with several “peace conferences,” which in practice were soviet friendly debating forums. The staff of *Commentary* were essentially Marxist in their outlook, but

³⁸ Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64

³⁹ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 6

⁴⁰ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 8

⁴¹ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 17

actively fought against any excuses for Stalinism or Soviet behavior. When Senator Joseph McCarthy began his anticommunist crusade, the *Commentary* was in general moderate in its criticism and refused to defend active Communists.⁴² Kristol, for instance, argued that a group hostile to constitutional democracy and supporting the enemy in the Korean War deserved neither sympathy nor the right to government employment.⁴³ *Commentary* saw the fight against Communism as the “great moral imperative of our time” and took a consistently anti-Communist line.⁴⁴ In this they were firmly within the Democratic mainstream, and until the beginning of the 60s they considered themselves proud FDR Liberals. Yet their identity as ambitious sons of immigrants contained a spark that slowly led in the direction of conservatism. Irving Kristol, the pioneer of this trend argued in 1952 that “conformity, if we mean by that profound consensus on moral and political first principles, is the condition for a decent society.”⁴⁵ Even while the new chief editor Norman Podhoretz opened doors for exciting new authors like Philip Roth who made his debut in *Commentary*, critics pointed out how the magazine had become an apologist for middle-class culture and values.⁴⁶ The group of writers had in a few years moved from a Marxist position into consensus liberals with a disdain for conflict and the revolutionary. To their surprise the outsiders had found that the doors into mainstream American professional life could be opened through hard work.

Their own success story had made the soon to be neoconservatives supportive of the basic FDR reforms, but set them on a collision course against developments within the Democratic Party. In 1965, some years after Irving Kristol left *Commentary*, he founded a new journal called *The Public Interest* together with Daniel Bell. Frequent contributors were James Q. Wilson, Nathan Glazer and later Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who the same year had made a scandal with his report “The Negro Family.” Their goal was to provide a counterweight to the thinking behind President Johnson’s Great Society. Kristol and his companions felt the War on Poverty was based on a “sociological fantasy that if one gave political power to the poor by sponsoring “community action,” they would lift themselves out of poverty at the expense of the rich.”⁴⁷ Having grown up in lower-middle class or working-class households they felt political militancy and class struggle would be counter-productive for poor people. They also began to doubt the ability of federal government to efficiently run

⁴² Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 33

⁴³ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 19

⁴⁴ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 65

⁴⁵ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 45

⁴⁶ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 72

⁴⁷ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 29

complex anti-poverty programs through Washington agencies.⁴⁸ Meanwhile in *Commentary* a separation from the “New Left” gradually became noticeable. The magazine had fully supported the Civil Rights movement, but when it came to the counter-culture they had been skeptical even of the Beat Generation in 1950s. As the 1960s developed Podhoretz saw a rebellion without a cause led by a bunch of middle class brats refusing “to be bound by rules, any rules.”⁴⁹ For him this rebellion had little interest in the working class, but glorified violence, romanticized Third World dictators and jumped on the most simplistic solutions. With the help of his editor Neal Kozodoy *Commentary* ran a tight ship when it came to which views were published. David Brooks, who would later contribute to the founding of *Weekly Standard*, remarked he could not remember his first piece for *Commentary*, but he remembered his third, because that was the first time a sentence of his had appeared in the magazine.⁵⁰

In their skepticism of the zeitgeist Kristol and Podhoretz agreed, but they held a different opinion of the Cold War. *Commentary* still held to a consistent and severe criticism of the Vietnam War and had softened their view on the Communist threat against the West.⁵¹ Kristol on the other hand, having spent a few years living in Paris and London, had been shocked to see the extent of Communist influence on the Western European elites. He writes how it was in the area of foreign policy he had his first doubts about Social Democracy and Liberalism, since both currents of thought seemed incapable of recognizing and dealing with an existential enemy over time without losing their resolve.⁵²

In 1968 Richard Nixon won the Presidency. Goldwater republicanism had never been an alternative for these disenchanted Democrats because of his crusade to dismantle the New Deal reforms, but with Nixon they saw a leader who acknowledged the Liberal framework while trying to steer it in a Conservative direction. Moynihan joined the Nixon administration and created the Family Assistance Program which ultimately was defeated in Congress. The goal of this program was to have a negative income tax, a guaranteed minimum income, which would cease the unduly meddling of social workers and community organizers into people’s lives while increasing support to the poor.⁵³ Nixon also made an attempt of recruiting Democratic Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson as Secretary of Defense. At the same

⁴⁸ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 57

⁴⁹ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 98

⁵⁰ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 182

⁵¹ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 94

⁵² Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 25

⁵³ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 58

time the Conservative establishment wanted to broaden the movement beyond traditional conservatism, and Kristol's network was seen as an interesting addition. So the Wall Street Journal began to bring mainstream attention to the articles in *The Public Interest*, while the traditionally economy centered think tank American Enterprise Institute recruited "dissident Democrats" Daniel Bell, Kristol, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Michael Novak and others.⁵⁴

It was within this Conservative "broadening" the first and second age neoconservatives met each other. While their self-image differed from embracing the neoconservative label (Kristol) to right-wing social democrat (Bell) and modern Wilsonian Progressive (Moynihan), there was a consensus on seeing an America in crisis.⁵⁵ The most urgent task was social stability rather than reform. The modern capitalist society had created a counter-culture that eroded the pillars of liberal civilization; religion, family, community and work. Democracy could not survive on capitalism alone. To ensure social stability the state needed to rid itself of "inflated expectations." The broadening of goals from equality of opportunity to equality of outcome had only weakened the confidence in government. New interventionist programs had been mismanaged by a class of mass-intellectuals who lacked both the know-how of experts as well as the humility of ordinary bureaucrats, and had little interest in traditional working-class issues. In 1972 a few neoconservatives, including Kristol, had jumped over to Nixon, but most held on allying themselves with old school Democrats like Hubert Humphrey and Scoop Jackson. Especially Jackson's '72 primary campaign with the slogan "common sense, for a change" attracted young activists like Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz and William Kristol.⁵⁶

The Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), a diverse group that included many of the neoconservatives, attempted to start a civil war for the soul of Democratic Party. Among the founders were Lyndon B. Johnson speechwriter Ben Wattenberg, Norman Podhoretz, his wife Midge Decter, and Jeane Kirkpatrick.⁵⁷ But there were also some of the founders, like social democrat Penn Kemble, who would never venture anywhere near the Republican Party. The group's manifesto declared New Politics a failure, a rejection of the people and institutions on which the Democratic Party had built its electoral strength.⁵⁸ They said no to quota politics, promoted an emphasis on law and order and rejected foreign policy

⁵⁴ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 33

⁵⁵ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 76

⁵⁶ Ben Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neoconservatism* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008, Kindle edition), 13 / Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 118-121

⁵⁷ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 86

⁵⁸ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 89

isolationism and defeatism. Among practicing politicians both Hubert Humphrey and “Scoop” Jackson joined, as well as the newly elected Senator Moynihan in 1976. Labor union leaders were well represented with Kemble, Al Barkan and Albert Shanker.⁵⁹ What drew them to CDM was a preference for “old school” liberalism over the New Left, as well as a special interest in the white working- and middle class. Penn had led a labor movement initiative to counter the influence of Wallace populism, Barkan was AFL-CIO’s director of political education, and Shanker was from the Teacher’s union, a traditionally white occupation that saw quotas having a huge impact.⁶⁰ For these guys Liberalism was intimately connected to the Cold War and steadfast anti-communism, and they had spent years countering communist influence within their unions. When Senator “Scoop” Jackson attacked Nixon’s détente policy against the Soviet Union it became an issue the CDM could rally around.

The Nixon administration believed détente, an easing of relations, between the U.S. and the Soviet Union secured American influence in an age where “Come Home America,” McGovern’s campaign slogan, seemed to embody the public’s attitude towards U.S. foreign policy. The Vietnam War had ended with an ominous and unstable cease fire, and the Watergate scandal escalated almost day by day. In this climate the Jeffersonian impulse to untangle America from foreign commitments grew in tandem with the wish to purify the government at home and reining in what was now seen as the excessive executive power of the President. The Nixon administration thought of Henry Jackson as an ally in foreign policy. Kissinger writes “we thought the disagreements were tactical or based on misunderstanding ... We began to realize that the attack was fundamental. Jackson sought to destroy our policy, not to ameliorate it ... our test was whether we were, on balance, better off with an accord than without.”⁶¹ Jackson had already pressed successfully for increased Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union once, but the Jackson-Vanik Amendment sought to deny normal trade relations (then called Most Favored Nation status) unless the Soviets allowed free emigration.⁶² It was obvious to everyone that the Soviets would not tolerate any meddling in their internal policies, but Jackson’s rationale was to highlight the contrast between what he saw as the free world and the totalitarianism behind the iron curtain. Despite Kissinger’s pleas about everyone wanting the same thing in the end, the stance can be summed up by Jeane Kirkpatrick who some years later wrote how “the ‘realistic’ foreign policy that pursues

⁵⁹ Ben Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neoconservatism* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008, Kindle edition), 138

⁶⁰ AFL-CIO stands for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

⁶¹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982), 984

⁶² Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982), 1252

‘national interest’ without regard to morality, ultimately founders on its lack of realism about the irreducible human concern with morality.”⁶³

Many Liberals who attacked Nixon failed to see that by destroying the President, and discrediting the institutions that allowed him to do what he did, they undermined the popular confidence in government which was necessary for Cold War Liberalism to work.⁶⁴ The CDM feared the Jeffersonian impulses that could emerge stronger without a clearly defined enemy. Senators like Jackson wanted to preserve Presidential power from too much Congressional hampering, yet supported that Congress be informed within 60 days of Presidential Agreements, and at least Humphrey supported the War Powers Resolution which removed the possibility for “secret wars,” and demanded a congressional approval for military involvement lasting more than sixty days.⁶⁵

The links between political factions in the 1970s were tangled together, as is also shown when Moynihan after publishing a neocon essay in *Commentary* called “The United States in Opposition” was asked by an enthusiastic Kissinger to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.⁶⁶ The essay demanded an end to American apologies for imperfect democracies, and sought to take a stand against Third World despots. The old school Liberals, neoconservatives and Republican realists, all saw something useful in each other. What slowly separated the future Reaganites from the Hawkish Democrats were domestic issues. Those who became involved with the American Enterprise Institute were influenced by ambitious new ideas regarding economy and government (like supply-side economics), and seemed more inclined to join forces with Reagan, either as full Republicans (Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick) or “Democrats in name only,” like Ben Wattenberg who is a registered Democrat yet has supported the Republican nominee in every Presidential election after 1976 except 1992.⁶⁷

CDM had some hopes for Jimmy Carter and accepted him after “Scoop” Jackson was out of the primary race. As the leading member drifted apart domestically they focused more on what bound them together, which was foreign policy. But Carter who ran as a centrist was indebted to the “McGovern wing,” and only hired Paul Wolfowitz among the CDM hawks. Among many disappointments two events in particular alienated the neoconservatives from

⁶³ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 156

⁶⁴ H. W. Brands, *The Strange Death of American Liberalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 100

⁶⁵ William B. Spong Jr., The War Powers Resolution Revisited: Historic Accomplishment or Surrender?, 16 *Wm. & Mary L. Rev.* 823 (1975), <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr/vol16/iss4/8>, 835

⁶⁶ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 94

⁶⁷ Ben Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neoconservatism* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008, Kindle edition), 123

Carter and the Democrats. The first was in the early days of Carter's presidency when he appointed Paul Warnke to lead the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and SALT negotiations. Warnke embodied the complete opposite viewpoint as the CDM crowd. He was both a former McGovern advisor and had in 1975 attacked the whole idea of global American strategic superiority as costly, unnecessary and dangerous.⁶⁸ CDM felt alienated and pushed aside on one of their most important issues. The second event came in January 1980 as Carter invited the CDM leaders to a White House meeting, as he needed to reconcile party interests before the election. The meeting went badly from the beginning. "Carter didn't even understand who we were," Wattenberg writes of the event. "His briefing memo had said that we were interested in human rights. Carter went on about a difficult human rights situation in Ecuador (Ecuador!) Perhaps we could help there."⁶⁹ After Carter had left, Vice President Walter Mondale gave the hawkish speech Carter should have given, but all love was now lost.⁷⁰

With Reagan in 1980 many neoconservatives finally realized they were in fact conservatives. The *Commentary* magazine openly supported Reagan for President, and kicked off 1980 by asking fifty-two writers if Jew's traditional commitment to Liberalism should be reconsidered.⁷¹ Most had relaxed feelings toward Evangelicals with whom they shared the moral clarity. For a neocon, secular humanism which William Kristol called "the opiate of the elite," posed the greatest danger to the American soul these days.⁷² The young Robert Kagan embraced the neoconservative label when he wrote how neoconservatism "combines an idealist's moralism, and even messianism, with a realist's belief in the importance of power."⁷³ On the domestic front the difference between neo- and conservatism proper became increasingly vague, but the signifier was the support of the fundamentals in the welfare state, from Social Security to Medicare.⁷⁴ In 1979 Richard Allen, a major influence in the Reagan campaign's foreign policy team and later his first National Security Advisor, began to actively court neoconservative Democrats.⁷⁵ It was an easy choice regarding foreign policy, but domestically the Republicans were lacking. Jeane Kirkpatrick complained how "the

⁶⁸ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 129

⁶⁹ Ben Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neoconservatism* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008, Kindle edition), 166

⁷⁰ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 135

⁷¹ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 131

⁷² Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 142

⁷³ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 156

⁷⁴ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 136

⁷⁵ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 182

Republican Party has not articulated any inclusive vision of the public good that reflects concern for the well-being of the whole community.”⁷⁶ In the end the deciding factor for most was their lack of influence in the Democratic Party. The people who rose to power all sounded more like Ted Kennedy than “Scoop” Jackson. Allen on the other hand invited several neoconservative Democrats to join the foreign- and security policy team of the Reagan campaign.

When Reagan came to power a number of neoconservatives were asked to serve. The young Elliot Abrams, former aide to Senator Jackson, became assistant secretary of state. Carl Gershman led the new Endowment for Democracy from 1983. Eugene Rostow became director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Paul Wolfowitz went almost directly from the Carter administration to become head of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department in 1981, where he hired Francis Fukuyama, Lewis “Scooter” Libby and Zalmay Khalilzad.⁷⁷ In the second Reagan period Bill Bennett became secretary of education with William Kristol and David Tell as aides, and Robert Kagan got a job as speechwriter for secretary of state George Shultz. In short, while neoconservatives were only a small part of the overall Reagan administration, their influence was considerable compared to their years in the Democratic camp.

Finally Jeane Kirkpatrick became the UN Ambassador after Reagan himself had been deeply impressed by her *Commentary* essay “Dictatorship and Double Standards,” in which she attacked Carter for criticizing allied authoritarian regimes harder than the enemy totalitarian ones.⁷⁸ She argued that in addition to being morally dubious it was also strategically unwise since an authoritarian regime could move in a liberal direction, something no totalitarian Communist state had ever done.⁷⁹ Jeane Kirkpatrick’s essay is interesting because it captures what seems to be a classic contradiction in U.S. foreign policy. The gist of her argument is that from China under Chiang Kaishek to Iran under the Shah, the U.S. has been tolerant of dictatorships as long as they could identify a path towards modernization and free markets. However when these regimes come under pressure from revolutionaries, who are either openly Communist or hostile to the U.S., the American reaction is the (Jeffersonian) impulse to draw a parallel to their own revolutionary past. They ignore the illiberal aspects of the insurgents and begin to pressure the regime towards rapid

⁷⁶ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 184

⁷⁷ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 121

⁷⁸ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 161

⁷⁹ <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/dictatorships-double-standards/>

democratic reform and accommodation of radical demands. The end result is a further destabilization of the regime and a global loss of confidence in the U.S. as an ally. In order to fight the totalitarian threat, the U.S. should urge democratization only when a friendly regime is secure from radicalism. It should also hold Communist regimes to the same standard as it does its friends.

Jeane Kirkpatrick's argument was typical of many older neoconservatives. They were supportive of democracy, but spared the resources and their Wilsonian vigor for the totalitarian states, those who posed an existential threat to American values.⁸⁰ On the other hand the younger neoconservatives, most rising to preeminence in Reagan's second period, had two crucial experiences before the end of the Cold War. In 1986 the U.S., in a policy formulated by Wolfowitz, supported a push for democracy in the Philippines rather than their ally Ferdinand Marcos.⁸¹ Then a year later the U.S. did the same in South Korea.⁸² In both cases a reluctant Reagan was persuaded to ignore Kirkpatrick's lessons and commit to democracy, and in both cases this led to a drastic weakening of radical leftism and anti-Americanism. It now seemed America could uphold its values and win at the same time. Another reason for the difference in outlook is that Kirkpatrick and her compatriots had spent a lot of time battling the classical Liberal worldview. Liberal modernization theory had faith that government elites and experts could overcome the obstacles of backwards indigenous culture and underdevelopment, and lead Third World countries on the same path towards affluence and liberty the U.S. had once traversed.⁸³ The new generation combined the Conservative belief in the market and individual agency with the post-modern insight that traditions were not static obstacles to be overcome, but flexible and able to be used in the pursuit of development.⁸⁴ Together with American idealism this led naturally to a more simplified theory of the benefits of liberal democracy reminiscent of the early days of modernization theory.

Although happier with a Reagan administration than they had been for years, the neoconservative's relationship with Reagan was not harmonious. In the first period the ones outside the administration supported the defense building, the "Star Wars" Strategic Defense

⁸⁰ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 140
⁸¹ <http://www.focusweb.org/node/605> / Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 138

⁸² John Kie-Chiang Oh, *Korean Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 93-97

⁸³ Michael Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 157

⁸⁴ Michael Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 163

Initiative and the general direction of Reagan's policy towards the Soviet Union.⁸⁵ But in Reagan's second period these Cold War hawks of *Commentary* reacted with disgust to the U.S. policies towards Gorbachev's glasnost.⁸⁶ The magazine grew increasingly rigid and old time contributors like Irving Kristol founded "The National Interest" to become a more inclusive and less dogmatic outlet for neoconservative ideas. While this new magazine in 1989 published Fukuyama's "The End of History" essay, *Commentary* was stuck arguing how Soviet capability has never been higher.⁸⁷ Within the administration neoconservatives like Richard Perle lost influence on the big issue of Soviet relations, and Rostow had lost his position as early as 1983.⁸⁸ The fall of the Soviet Union meant the ultimate victory for the old generation of neoconservatives, but also reduced influence in a Republican Party where many disdained their domestic ideas, like Conservative historian Stephen Tonsor when he joked "It is splendid when the town whore gets religion and joins the church. Now and then she makes a good choir director, but when she begins to tell the minister what he ought to say in his Sunday sermons, matters have been carried too far."⁸⁹ For the younger generation of neoconservatives the matter was different. Apart from some early work for Jackson and Moynihan they had rapidly moved away from the Democratic Party and were more integrated into the Republican mainstream on domestic issues. Their involvement continued into the George Bush Sr. administration.

Life within the Bush administration was hard for a neoconservative. Their frustrations are entertainingly described in John Podhoretz' (son of Norman) "Hell of a Ride," in which he describes a President who is bent on distancing himself from the Reaganites ("The forms that job seekers had to fill out asked candidates to specify their 'Bush experience'"⁹⁰), but are unable to define what a 'Bushie' is. He describes a White House that lacks ideas of their own and thus ends up being fixated on Congress like no administration before, "not even Lyndon Johnson's."⁹¹ While working in the Reagan administration it was quite simple; the President opposed growth of government, higher taxes and the spread of Communism. "[I]n the Bush White House, it was very difficult to feel a part of things in the same way, because staffers

⁸⁵ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 159

⁸⁶ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 197

⁸⁷ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 164

⁸⁸ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 192-197

⁸⁹ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 207

⁹⁰ John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies 1989-1993* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 89

⁹¹ John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies 1989-1993* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 109

had no ideas from one day to the next where the administration stood on *anything*.”⁹² The hero of the story is Bill Kristol who uses his skill to promote “New Right” ideas in a language the Bush administration can stomach. A Reaganite, in Podhoretz’ words, are an amalgam of four different camps: The social conservatives, the anti-communist, the fiscal conservatives, and the libertarian conservatives.⁹³ Three of the four camps had migrated from the Democrats during the 60s and 70s. The conclusion is that establishment figures like Bush had become strangers in their own party. Bush was left with a hunger for public office and recognition, but no substance or sense of mission. Podhoretz ends with an anecdote about his farewell address:

[Bob] Zoellick wanted to know what the President wanted to talk about in his final message to the American people. The President thought a little, thought a little more. Said he wanted to say something about family. The family is very important. But, he said, none of this right-wing agenda stuff. ... The family is important – that was it after sixty-eight years on the earth, thirty of them in public life ... He gives no farewell address.⁹⁴

The author Podhoretz, the hero Kristol and the sage David Tell stands out in this story, and they felt the Republican Party needed to be better at formulating ideas, to link Reaganite ideas, as they identified them, to a new decade. Meanwhile *Commentary* was no less exasperated with the new Republican standard-bearer. While the Reagan period had been about the struggle between ideas and values, none of this was visible in the policies of the Bush administration.⁹⁵ The 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, and Bush’s tepid response, set the tone. Most of the neoconservatives who had not burned all bridges to the Democratic Party chose Clinton in 1992. A few, like Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick, argued for a more modest realist foreign policy, but they were now out of touch with the mindset of most neocons.⁹⁶ The neoconservative sentiments were better captured in the 1993 (leaked in 1992) Defense Planning Guidance report authored by Paul Wolfowitz, Scooter Libby and Zalmay Khalizad, and heartily approved by secretary of defense Dick Cheney. Published just before Clinton took over, it took an offensive stance in promoting democracy. The lesson learned from the final years of the Cold War and Bush’s Operation Desert Storm was how “history suggests that effective multilateral action is most likely to come about in response to U.S. leadership, not as an alternative to it.”⁹⁷

⁹² John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies 1989-1993* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 129

⁹³ John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies 1989-1993* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 129

⁹⁴ John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies 1989-1993* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 234

⁹⁵ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 166

⁹⁶ Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 222

⁹⁷ http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/naarpr_Defense.pdf, 8

What is a Reaganite? And what does it entail at the dawn of the 21st Century? Those were questions that the neoconservative veterans of the Bush administration sought to answer. Podhoretz defines the movements behind Reagan as consisting of religious conservatives, reacting to the rapid secularization of the 1960s and 70s; anti-Communists, who had not jumped on the détente bandwagon after Vietnam; economic conservatives, who wanted to roll back the excesses of the Great Society and keep a balanced budget; finally there were the libertarian conservatives who emphasized civil liberties and freedom from government intervention.⁹⁸ Several of these factions consisted largely of disillusioned Democrats who had no natural link to the traditional “country club Republican” elite. Reagan’s big achievement was his ability to balance and mold these factions into a powerful constituency. The Bush presidency tried to talk the Reagan language, but it was really a return to the country club Republicanism of Nelson Rockefeller and George Romney. Bush and his equals felt entitled to the Republican Party and saw these Reaganites as upstarts and zealots. They courted them because they had to, not because they understood them.

As Bill Clinton took over as President, William Kristol along with Fred Barnes, David Brooks, John Podhoretz, David Tell and several others, decided that a new conservative magazine was needed.⁹⁹ *Commentary*, which they all had written for occasionally, was still in the hands of Norman Podhoretz and his group of old-timers. The *National Review* was seen as too traditionally conservative. The group had initially started a think tank, yet as they felt the Republican future come faster than expected, once again growing into a vital movement, they wanted to reach broader than just the top echelon of the Republican Party.¹⁰⁰ Armed with idealism and at least some participants with experience in running a magazine Kristol managed to get media mogul Rupert Murdoch to fund their new magazine called the *Weekly Standard*. Unlike *The National Review* which in its manifesto modestly proclaimed “[i]t stands athwart history, yelling Stop, at a time when no one is inclined to do so,” the people behind the *Weekly Standard* had experienced having a hand on the steering-wheel.¹⁰¹ The magazine kept an eye on every field, but with an especial interest in foreign policy, as one of their main worries about the future of conservative politics was the absence of foreign policy in Newt Gingrich’s recently launched “Contract with America.”¹⁰² On a broad range of issues they would attempt to define and promote Reaganite values to a

⁹⁸ John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies 1989-1993* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 148

⁹⁹ William Kristol ed., *The Weekly Standard. A Reader: 1995-2005* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), xi

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Kolbert, “Debut for a Conservative Weekly.” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1995

¹⁰¹ <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/05/standing-athwart-history-the-political-thought-of-william-f-buckley-jr>

¹⁰² Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 230

well educated audience. The magazine had its debut in September 1995 and contained no manifesto, just a front page drawing of Newt Gingrich swinging in a rope, guns-blazing against a burning Capitol Hill.

Chapter Three

Years in Opposition – Clinton-Bashing and Balkan Boogie

A Principled Magazine

Behind the playful front page, the first issue presented a package of sober columns, one article leading into another on the same page, with only one sparingly illustrated article. Its layout gave the impression of



being a younger, equally smart, but more playful cousin of *Commentary*. The first editorial seemed in fact to strike a clear contrast to the pessimism of *Commentary*. There really was no need to stage a dramatic revenge for the humiliating 1990 budget deal the Democratic majority forced upon the Bush administration.¹ There would be plenty of time in the coming years. It noted that a conservative realignment was finally at hand, after 65 years of general Democratic hegemony. The mission of *Weekly Standard*, a magazine written by and for supporters of the Republican Party, was to speak for, interpret and guide this realignment.

While the *National Review* began with a defensive view of conservatism as a beleaguered ideology, the *Weekly Standard* set out to sound like benevolent conservatives. Regarding the first September 18 issue, William Kristol wrote how he initially set out to have the ideal balance of topics, between the topical and the longer-range.² This instantly proved an impossible feat, but at least this first issue read according to plan. It approved Newt Gingrich's goal of rapidly throwing out ideas, thus setting the agenda, and forcing Clinton to be reactive. William Kristol promoted the unorthodox Republican Colin Powell as a better candidate than Bob Dole, the choice of the GOP establishment.³ Charles Krauthammer took a more philosophical view by criticizing Gingrich's book *To Renew America* as naïve technology optimism and a one-sided commitment to cut government, rather than establish a positive vision for how to govern.⁴ On the foreign policy side Robert Kagan praised the NATO bomb strikes against the Bosnian Serb army as a welcome first step towards further

¹ "Our Kind of Budget Deal." *Weekly Standard*, September 18, 1995, 7

² William Kristol ed., *The Weekly Standard. A Reader: 1995-2005* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), xv

³ William Kristol, "President Powell?" *Weekly Standard*, September 18, 1995, 16

⁴ Charles Krauthammer, "A Critique of Pure Newt." *Weekly Standard*, September 18, 1995, 51

U.S. involvement, “because a timid superpower poses a greater danger to the present world order than ten Serbias.”⁵

All in all these articles promoted what would become the pillars of the magazine, with the possible exception of benevolence. It was to be involved, but with what they saw as a Reaganite passion for the unorthodox and activist, both in the domestic and global. Krauthammer’s critique is reminiscent of Irving Kristol’s creed that “if the Republican party were capable of thinking politically – i.e., thinking in terms of shaping the future – it would realize that its first priority is to shape the budget, not to balance it.”⁶ Ideologically the *Weekly Standard* saw the ideal Republican future as a marriage between what they regarded as Reaganism, with neoconservative principles. This is not to say that the writers shared the same worldview, especially not in the first couple of years, when potential writers did not have a formed opinion of what kind of conservative magazine the *Weekly Standard* was. Yet at the core were a few prolific writers that gave the magazine its distinct personality.

Fred Barnes was the one with the most media experience. He had been senior editor of the left leaning *The New Republic*, but despite this he was a staunch Republican, contributing both to the *Weekly Standard* as well as the new conservative news channel Fox News.⁷ Serving as the political correspondent, he covered the everyday happenings of U.S. politics. Meanwhile William Kristol and David Tell, colleagues in both the Reagan and Bush administrations, were responsible for the more opinionated writings, along with the young Tucker Carlson. Among the editorials Tell handled the domestic issues, while Kristol and Robert Kagan took care of the ones concerning foreign policy. Robert Kagan and John R. Bolton were the main voices in the field of foreign policy. As well as covering politics proper, one of the goals of the *Weekly Standard* was to link politics and culture in order to formulate a broader, more holistic conservative ideology. The realm of culture had long been the domain of Liberals. While the Republican Party found it easy to talk about tax cuts and freedom from government, the relationship with social conservatives was fundamentally awkward. In order to continue the realignment the *Weekly Standard* wanted to show that social conservatives belonged in the center of the Republican ideology. It is this aspect of the *Weekly Standard* that is the main link to the first generation of neoconservatives. The main cultural writers were David Brooks and John Podhoretz, and especially Brooks’ choice of topics, references and writing style are similar to those of Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol.

⁵ Robert Kagan, “Mission Possible.” *Weekly Standard*, September 18, 1995, 22

⁶ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 348

⁷ <http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/personalities/fred-barnes/bio/#s=a-d>



The connection with past neoconservatism is not as clear when it comes to the main concern of this thesis which is foreign policy, the area where the *Weekly Standard* made its biggest impact. The first generation of neoconservatives felt a sense of ‘mission accomplished’ after the Soviet empire had dissolved. The generation behind the *Standard* on the other hand had come of age during the 1970s and 1980s when, in their eyes, the so called Realists had produced nothing but a slow decline in U.S. ability to influence global development, while the idealism of Ronald Reagan had ushered in a new age of American hegemony. In the July 1996 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the year after founding the *Weekly Standard*, Robert Kagan and William Kristol formulated their vision of what they defined as a ‘neo-Reaganite foreign policy.’⁸ There are few instances where the ideology of the *Standard* is so clearly articulated and it is therefore useful to explore its arguments in some length.

Their essay was an attempt to influence the Republican Party, and its argument was both practical but also directed towards the foundations of the American ideological fundament. The problem with the Bush administration, in their view, was the notion that you could continue an activist foreign policy with pragmatists at the helm. Secretary of State James Baker and President Bush backed away from Reagan’s ideologically loaded rhetoric, finding it easier to justify the Gulf War in terms of protecting jobs from excessive energy prices, rather than delve into principles. Like Nixon, Bush wanted to be a foreign policy President, but where Nixon had the Cold War as an obvious legitimation, Bush made the fatal error of not seeing a reason to tell his people why. This led to a double weakness where people could not identify why America should devote its resources abroad, as well as a feeling that Bush neglected domestic policy. With his slogan ‘it’s the economy, stupid’, Clinton laid out what many felt was the primary concern of the chief executive, and promised a return to domestic affairs now that the threat of the Cold War finally was over. Consequently the Republicans, in their wish to return to the offensive in domestic policy, largely neglected foreign policy.

⁸William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 1996. (A free online version is here: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/1996/07/01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy/1ea>)

For Kagan and Kristol the goal for the U.S. should be to keep a “benevolent global hegemony,” where it supported its friends, advanced its interests and stood up for its principles. Clinton’s first period did not end the activist American foreign policy, but the reductions in the defense budget would gradually erode the capability to project U.S. power. What was needed was a return to the spending level of 1978, before Carter and Reagan’s build-up, as a percentage of the federal budget used on defense.

This however could not be without a change in attitude. According to Kagan and Kristol there had developed a cultural gap between America’s professional military, and the people who did not see either the hardships of the “American-style ‘empire management,’” or the benefits. The solution could in part come from expanded forms of reserve service, and from politicians simply devoting more time to talk about U.S. military efforts. But in order to maintain the support for the foreign policy America needed, there had to be moral clarity in its efforts. Kristol and Kagan argued how U.S. interests and moral goals were almost always in harmony; the examples being used were Reagan’s withdrawal of support for the dictatorships in the Philippines and South Korea. A daring break with Kissingerian Realism these actions delivered strategic benefits as well as appealing to the moral foundations of the American creed, resulting in popular support for U.S. actions.

The principles of the Declaration of Independence are felt as a universal truth by the American people, these have been the main points of Conservatives’ struggle against domestic relativistic multiculturalism, but ignoring this creed abroad would in the end undermine its appeal at home. Both Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan managed to cheerfully convey the responsibility that comes with increased power by appealing to patriotism. The essay concluded with the authors stressing the link between patriotism, national honor and the ability to govern at home and abroad, and its particular consequence for American conservatism: “A true ‘conservatism of the heart’ ought to emphasize both personal and national responsibility, relish the opportunity for national engagement, embrace the possibility of national greatness, and restore a sense of the heroic, which has been sorely lacking in American foreign policy.”

This was not a conventional foreign policy essay, and its pathos and outright appeal to honor was not often used in the pages of the *Weekly Standard*. Yet the themes of the article were ideas that led to the establishment of a different kind of conservative magazine in the first place, and the link between citizenship and military ventures abroad, which seemed kind of crude in this essay, would continue to be developed within the pages of the *Standard*. The

article met with resistance from defense analysts Kim Holmes and John Hillen at the Heritage Foundation who believed the American people could understand a mission for their foreign policy without a manufactured crusade.⁹ They accused Kagan and Kristol for ignoring the severe limitedness of Reagan's military interventions, and of making a polarized political issue the simple fact that the U.S. military was woefully underfunded for its present strategy. They also pointed out that the Neo-Reaganites were out of touch with the foreign policy of Bob Dole's presidential campaign.

Even without any clout regarding the GOP

establishment of the mid-1990s, the *Weekly Standard* was primarily focused on widening the scope and guiding Conservative decision makers, and the informed public that could exert political pressure. As William Kristol wrote about politicians and their aides, "people are too busy ... calendars are too full and five big things still have to get done by six o'clock whether you've perfected them or not."¹⁰ So with this in mind the *Weekly Standard* set out to influence the current decisions that were on the Congressional agenda.

As the *Weekly Standard* began publishing, the biggest foreign policy question was the civil war in Bosnia, and what to do about it. The *Standard* was near anonymously enthusiastic in its support of military involvement in Bosnia, but the rationale took a larger view than just the Bosnian situation and had two lines of argument. From the first issue Robert Kagan argued for intervention in Bosnia on terms that went beyond the intervention itself. Ever since the Vietnam War the military, and a majority of politicians, had explained to the American people that military activism does not work, Kagan argued.¹¹ This state of mind prevented the U.S. from intervening until events had escalated to a point like Operation Desert Storm, where the collapse of regional stability forced a large scale U.S. intervention to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Even this impressive victory did not cure the Vietnam syndrome because the limited goal was merely a return to the status quo. The high threshold for U.S. military action made rogue players reckless in challenging U.S. interests, as they considered it a gamble they could win. A lower threshold for intervention could thus have the effect of



⁹ Kim Holmes and John Hillen, "Misreading Reagan's Legacy: A Truly Conservative Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 1997

¹⁰ William Kristol ed., *The Weekly Standard. A Reader: 1995-2005* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), xiv

¹¹ Robert Kagan, "Mission Possible." *Weekly Standard*, September 18, 1995, 22

reducing the threats to the American world order. The Realist argument against what they perceived as adventurism had been that the U.S. had to focus on defending vital interests in order to avoid overstretch. Kagan on the other hand argues that Bosnia was a vital interest because it was bound up with the question of America's role in Europe and the role of NATO.¹² Before the 'lesson of Munich,' the failure of the democracies to stop Hitler's aggression before the Second World War, there was a lesson of the Spanish Civil War and a lesson of Manchuria, where early action could have halted the steadily escalating fascist aggression. In other words a more activist policy to enforce American ideals was the best foreign policy in the post-Cold War world.

The second line of argument was one of executive power. In its explicitly named editorial "Bosnia: Support the President," the *Standard* scolded the Republican Party for undermining President Clinton's authority when it came to Bosnia, and in effect promoting U.S. isolationism.¹³ At first glance it seems like an echo of the criticism made by the Liberal Wilsonian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in his July, 1995 *Foreign Affairs* essay.¹⁴ He too castigated Republicans for their consistent undermining of Clinton regarding Bosnia. For Schlesinger this is tied up to the specific Republican isolationism that accepted unilateralism only, and refused anything that sounded like collective action, on which he argues the Clintonian view is based. Sure, Schlesinger argued, America could reject collective security and go back to a narrowly construed view of national interest, but this meant surrendering a magnificent dream to an anarchic world. The quintessential *Weekly Standard* view shared the magnificent dream of a democratic world order, but questioned the benefits of multilateralism. Defending the act of the President making a "judgment call" which is what the decision to use force in Bosnia boiled down to, they criticized Clinton's use of multilateralism to muddle responsibility.¹⁵ Andrew Bacevich, a diplomatic history scholar and frequent contributor, argued that "in conveying the impression that NATO and UN military officers possess the authority to decide when to initiate hostilities and when to desist from them, Clinton tampers unwittingly with the principle of civilian control."¹⁶ Linked to this was the smug criticism of Democrats like Clinton's chief of staff Leon Panetta, who as a Congressman during both the Reagan and Bush administrations tried using the War Powers Act actively to reign in executive power over military interventions, but under a Democratic President insisted that the President could

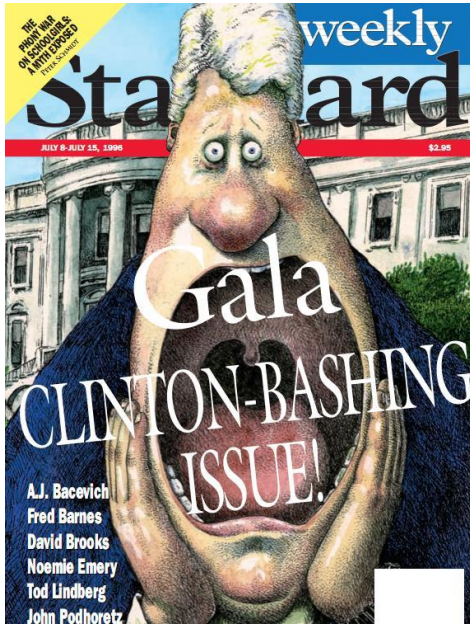
¹² Robert Kagan, "America, Bosnia, Europe: A Compelling Interest." *Weekly Standard*, November 6, 1995, 27

¹³ "Bosnia: Support the President." *Weekly Standard*, December 4, 1995, 7

¹⁴ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Back to the Womb? Isolationism's [sic] Renewed Threat." *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 1995

¹⁵ "Bosnia: Support the President." *Weekly Standard*, December 4, 1995, 7

¹⁶ A.J. Bacevich, "Where's the Buck?" *Weekly Standard*, September 25, 13



act freely without Congressional approval.¹⁷ The War Powers Act gives Congress the right to be consulted “in every possible instance,” and the ability to withdraw troops after 90 days. Consistent with the ideology of Schlesinger Jr., Clinton often based his legitimacy on the concept of collective action, whether it was a UN mandate or a broad NATO decision.¹⁸

There was on Bosnia a tactical agreement between the New Democrats who discarded the lessons of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution and Watergate (which was a deep skepticism towards broadly defined executive power) in the name of Wilsonian multilateral activism, and the *Weekly Standard* which, in line with Cheney and Wolfowitz’s 1993 Defense Planning Guidance report, wanted to bring back the strong executive power of the first half of the Cold War. Although overwhelmingly supported by most writers, the use of ground troops in Bosnia was argued against in the *Standard* by Charles Krauthammer, who noted the lack of an exit strategy and Balkan not being a vital interest for America.¹⁹ The commitment to increased executive power on the other hand was unanimously shared. In fact, the incessant demand from the generals of always having an iron clad exit strategy in place was seen by Kagan and Kristol as part of the Vietnam syndrome that inhibited a President from using American power rationally. It is worth noting that the first time Senator John McCain was mentioned by the editors it was in the role of a neo-isolationist who argued against the use of American force in Bosnia (and to defend Kurds in Iraq) on the grounds that no vital American interests were involved, not realizing that “what are at stake are American principles and America’s credibility as the world’s preeminent defender of those principles.”²⁰ McCain wrote back that it was “offensive incrementalism” he feared rather than intervention in itself, and he saw himself as an “interventionist with sound judgement.”²¹ It seems the agenda promoted by the *Weekly Standard* struck a chord with the Republican way of conducting foreign policy as McCain largely accepted the framework of the *Standard*’s debate, although he clearly rejected their interpretation of his position. It is unfortunate that the White House

¹⁷ Matthew Reese, “Hypocrite, Thy Name is ...” *Weekly Standard*, December 11, 1995, 17

¹⁸ Andrew Rudalevige, *The New Imperial Presidency* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 194

¹⁹ Charles Krauthammer, “Why America Must Not Go Into Bosnia.” *The Weekly Standard*, December 4, 1995, 15

²⁰ “Between Iraq and a Hard Place.” *Weekly Standard*, September 30, 1996

²¹ John McCain, “Between Isolation and Intervention.” *Weekly Standard*, October 14, 1996, 4

and Congressional Democrats probably did not read the *Weekly Standard*, where they would have seen the contours of an idealistic commitment to an activist Executive freed from close Congressional scrutiny, without the Wilsonian impulse to seek broad international legitimacy, which would become the norm after 9/11.

The Lewinsky Scandal

The period concerning the crucial decisions about the U.S. mission in Bosnia was a period of détente towards the Clinton administration. While some kind of alignment would again appear in the case of Kosovo, the *Standard* grew into consistent critics of Clinton's foreign policy towards Iraq and China. Yet the harshest criticism was directed against Clinton's character, and the Lewinsky scandal would define the *Standard's* coverage of the second Clinton administration, also influencing their coverage of foreign policy.

From the beginning the *Weekly Standard* attacked Clinton as self-serving. On the political level the *Standard* consensus was neatly epitomized by guest writer Carl Cannon when he wrote "This willingness to wing it—or to say what is expedient—is one reason Clinton made it to the White House," a view of a 'finger-in-the-wind' politician that was probably shared among most conservative pundits.²² The *Standard* had little enthusiasm for the main GOP contenders (although Kristol was a solid supporter of the non-candidate Colin Powell), but reacted with unreserved joy as Clinton declared "the era of big government is over," and again proclaimed "Victory" as he restructured the Aid to Families with Dependent Children entitlement.²³ For a Republican magazine, they seemed surprisingly comfortable with Clinton's domestic triangulation. That is until the Lewinsky scandal broke, in January of 1998.

The scandal grew out of a harassment lawsuit that Paula Jones was fighting against the president.²⁴ Her lawyers succeeded in obtaining a ruling from the Supreme Court requiring Clinton to answer their questions, which led Clinton to deny under oath ever having a romantic relationship with his former intern Monica Lewinsky. For special prosecutor Kenneth Starr, who according to the *Standard* had spent fifteen million dollars by 1995 getting nowhere against Clinton on other issues, this was the perfect opportunity.²⁵ The *Weekly Standard*, having finally caught the 'greased pig' that had evaded scrutiny for six

²² Carl Cannon, "Bill Clinton's Pathetic Lies." *Weekly Standard*, October 2, 1995, 25

²³ "We Win." *Weekly Standard*, February 5, 1996, 9 / "Victory." *Weekly Standard*, August 12, 1996, 9

²⁴ Pauline Maier et al., *Inventing America: A History of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003), 1073

²⁵ Byron York, "Counselgate, Again." *Weekly Standard*, October 23, 1995, 10

years, saw this incident as an epicenter for a character flaw that pervaded all aspects of his presidency.²⁶

From this point even the issues where the *Weekly Standard* agreed with his policies were given a negative spin. For instance his refusal to use Federal funds on injection equipment for heroin addicts was explained as merely a result of “Bill Clinton’s poll-obsessed fecklessness.”²⁷ In a key editorial the *Standard* attempted to argue the broad consequences of the Lewinsky affair by a reading of Hamilton’s Federalist No. 70.²⁸ Hamilton and the *Standard* agreed there must be “energy in the Executive.” The argument for a single Executive was that he would be more narrowly watched and readily suspected. He would thus have to protect his leadership by earning the public trust through constant exposure and inspection. The editorial goes on to link the “overwhelming circumstantial evidence that [the] president has been involved in tawdry and criminal activity” due to his deficient character, his lack of availability in answering questions about it which concealed the Executive responsibility in darkness and forced the inquiring public to “unfairly incur the odium of scandal.” Finally the lack of a clear response resulted in constant questions from the press which overshadowed his meetings with the British, and Thai prime minister, as well as Yasser Arafat, and continued to hamper his energy in making policy.

This remarkable mixture of high and low, inserting complicated analyses of constitutionalism next to quite viscous attacks on Clinton’s character became a defining feature of the *Weekly Standard*’s coverage of Clinton. The chain of cause and effect on the perception of the office of the President, and this effect on actual policy, would be an element in coverage on both domestic and foreign issues. The explanation for this was to be found in the Republican frustration with the public’s bifurcated view on Clinton. While the polls showed low personal-approval ratings, his job-approval ratings remained high.²⁹ While this is not unusual in the midst of a crisis, the two ratings should over time grow closer to reflect the public’s overall view of a presidency. This did not happen in the case of Clinton. The answer



²⁶ P.J. O’Rourke, “Catching the Greased Pig.” *Weekly Standard*, February 2, 1998, 11

²⁷ “Spins and Needles.” *Weekly Standard*, May 4, 1998, 9

²⁸ “The Presidency is Vacant.” *Weekly Standard*, May 18, 1998, 11

²⁹ Jeffrey Bell, *The Case for Polarized Politics* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 46 / Jeffrey Bell, “The Politics of Bifurcation.” *Weekly Standard*, March 13, 2000, 27

then for the *Standard* was to follow the old feminist slogan that the personal is political, believing that at some time Clinton's flawed personality would rub off on his policies in a way the public recognized.

In the book *Press Effect*, professor of communication Kathleen Hall Jamieson and journalist Paul Waldman, discussed how the media use what is called 'framing' to define problems – determining what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits; diagnose causes; make moral judgments – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies.³⁰ The framing created by the *Weekly Standard* became one of principle versus the fickle and corrupted White House. The most visible result of this framing was the somewhat excessive "their finest hour" cover after the House decided to impeach the President.³¹ While the effect regarding the Clinton presidency did not manifest itself, it worked as a part of a larger framing that would drive the question of character to become one of the most important features of the 2000 election.

Saddam Must Go

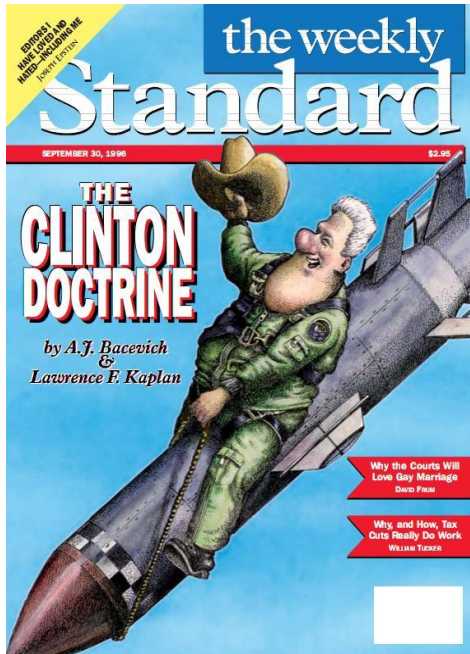
An ongoing concern for the *Weekly Standard* during Clinton's second term was the policy towards Iraq. Although it was not before 1997 that a considerable number of articles were devoted to the issue, there was a clear emphasis on the benefits of broad strategic shifts rather than the snail paced path of negotiations. An editorial concerning Israel concluded that "the United States did more to help the peace process by smashing Saddam and presiding over the Soviet Union's downfall than it did by formulating any number of clever plans for bringing Arabs and Israelis together."³² The first signs of a divergence between the *Standard* and Clinton's policy towards Iraq is the major article about "The Clinton Doctrine" by A.J. Bacevich and Lawrence Kaplan in September 1996, not long after Clinton's bombing of Iraq in retaliation for Saddam's ground offensive against the Kurds in northern Iraq.³³ They noted that the military activism of the Clinton administration would likely have lasting consequences for American security policy simply by having ignored the Weinberger/Powell doctrine of only committing forces when vital interests were at stake, with overwhelming strength and with clear military and political objectives, as well as a plausible exit strategy. The danger was that the administration combined this activism with a return to the

³⁰ Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Waldman, Paul, *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists, and the Stories that Shape the Political World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, Kindle edition), introduction

³¹ *Weekly Standard*, December 28, 1998

³² "The Real Middle East." *Weekly Standard*, May 6, 1996, 11

³³ A.J. Bacevich and Lawrence Kaplan, "The Clinton Doctrine." *Weekly Standard*, September 30, 1996, 16



Johnson/McNamara idea of using force as a part of diplomacy, to influence and prod an adversary. This return to Vietnam-war thinking was made possible by the new guided missiles that allowed use of force with minimal risk or collateral damage, as well as the military command's success in placing responsibility of failed action on the political leaders. Unfortunately, the authors argued, even in this day and age there was still a need to risk American lives if a threat was to be dealt with once and for all. 'Pinprick attacks' had merely a short term effect, if any.

Iraq did not take a prominent place until 1997 when Saddam Hussein increasingly began challenging the United Nations sanctions enforced by the U.S. Confronted with this new reality there were several attempts to conceive a new policy. In *Foreign Affairs* the foreign policy heavyweights Zbigniew Brzezinski (Carter's national security advisor), Brent Scowcroft (national security advisor to Ford and Bush Sr.) and Richard Murphy (Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East for six years under Reagan) argued for continuation of the sanctions, but less strict or even temporarily suspended, in order to keep the coalition together.³⁴ Without specifying any threshold, they asserted that should Saddam attempt to break the sanctions by force, the U.S. should mount a Desert Storm-like operation, but strive to get multilateral backing. The two RAND defense analysts Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser on the other hand argued that the large U.S. presence in the Middle East was halting the necessary evolution in the relationships between the countries.³⁵ In their view the departure of Saddam Hussein was "almost a prerequisite for the positive evolution of the region," but strangely Washington has not called for it directly. They stated that the U.S. should "make the ouster of Saddam an explicit feature" of its Gulf policy, but do not mention how. Also, this should not be done unilaterally, but in cooperation with Western allies.

Compared to the vague prescriptions these writers presented for dealing with Saddam, the writers of the *Weekly Standard* were not short of method. In a November 1997 editorial they lamented George H. W. Bush's criticism of those who believed it was a mistake not to

³⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft and Richard Murphy, "Differentiated Containment." *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 1997

³⁵ Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser, "Persian Gulf Myths." *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 1997

ouster Saddam Hussein during Desert Storm and proscribed a Desert Storm II.³⁶ While air bombing and missile strikes were all well and good, these measures would not achieve the end of Saddam's regime. There were no longer any opposition within Iraq strong enough to rise up, so U.S. ground troops were necessary. On the other hand the strength and morale of the Iraqi army was considerable lower in 1997 than in 1991, so the number of U.S. soldiers needed should be considerably lower. In December the *Standard* followed up with a special "Saddam must GO – a how to guide" issue. The editorial asserted that as the UN weapons inspectors were expelled from Iraq, the chances were Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), so the search was back at square one if the inspectors were allowed back in.³⁷ If they should get close again they could be expelled once more, while the coalition and their sanctions crumbled under disagreement. The first short article was written by Zalmay Khalilzad, who in the George W. Bush administration became respectively U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and the UN, and Paul Wolfowitz who later became deputy secretary of defense and president of the World Bank. They advocated real material support for what could become a revived Iraqi opposition, military protection for defecting Iraqi soldiers, as well as close cooperation with Turkey both to secure logistics and to make it clear to the Iraqi Kurds that their future is within Iraq rather than in a separate state.³⁸ Military historian Frederick Kagan looked back on Desert Storm and argued that air power proved insufficient to destroy Iraqi military capabilities, not to mention their possible factories of WMDs.³⁹ Henry Kissinger's former assistant Peter Rodman, who would become Assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs under Bush, wrote how George H. W. Bush managed to push the UN towards action by showing "absolute determination to act unilaterally," which made the other actors jump on in order to have influence on the outcome.⁴⁰ Finally Fred Barnes complained about the Republican lack of action regarding Saddam, when they "could have played Thatcher to President Clinton's Bush."⁴¹

This issue opened what is to become a sustained campaign for the use of military power against Saddam's regime. While the purpose was clear from the beginning, the "guide" was still light on means of implementation. Even so the direction was radically different from the one advocated by the leading advisors of former administrations, and more concise in

³⁶ "Saddam Must Go." *Weekly Standard*, November 17, 1997

³⁷ "The End of Containment." *Weekly Standard*, December 1, 1997, 13

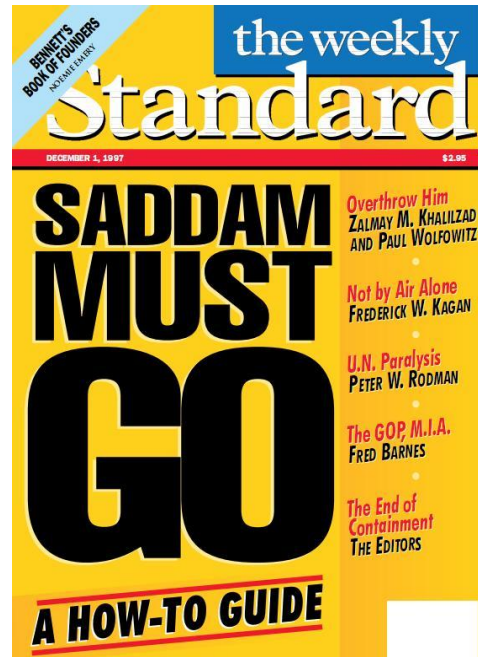
³⁸ Zalmay Khalilzad and Paul Wolfowitz, "Overthrow Him." *Weekly Standard*, December 1, 1997, 14

³⁹ Frederick Kagan, "Not by Air Alone." *Weekly Standard*, December 1, 1997, 15

⁴⁰ Peter Rodman, "U.N. Paralysis." *Weekly Standard*, December 1, 1997, 17

⁴¹ Fred Barnes, "The GOP, M.I.A." *Weekly Standard*, December 1, 1997, 18 / The reference to Thatcher is when she in a phone call with Bush Sr. before Desert Storm said "Don't go wobbling on me now, George," in order to make him keep his resolve.

proposing actual policy than the RAND article. The following months John R. Bolton, who under Bush became under secretary of state for arms control and international security, and ambassador to the UN, criticized Clinton's United Nation centered policy of containment towards Iraq. By focusing on the easily explained dispute over weapons inspectors, Bolton argued, the administration had neglected to explain and defend the economic sanctions, which were under pressure from public opinion who blamed the sanctions, rather than Saddam's policies.⁴² The impression was of a president that took the easy way out and pushed difficult choices into obscurity. Citing Hamilton's the Federalist no. 70 he concluded that "The only way to instill energy in such an [feeble] executive is to threaten domestic political consequences for inaction."⁴³ In March Bolton concluded that the passive U.S. policy had given room for the UN secretariat to begin a parallel line of negotiations with Iraq.⁴⁴ They were highly skeptical of the economic sanctions and almost completely excluded the possibility of a large-scale use of military force. The result, he asserted, would be to hasten the breakup of the fragile coalition and leave America alone.



Charles Krauthammer joined in with a mix of the personal and political when he hoped that Clinton was as dishonest about Iraq as he was on the Lewinsky scandal, as it was the last hope for an effective policy.⁴⁵ He worried that "Clinton may feel that he has to announce modest goals because he simply lacks the moral authority to order the kind of major military action that a Truman or a Bush could order." Meanwhile Robert Kagan drew the historic lines as he argued that "[Saddam] has, so to speak, marched his troops into the Rhineland and now waits to see what the United States will do."⁴⁶ According to Kagan there would never be a moment where Clinton had the same broad coalition that stood behind Desert Storm. If he was to mount the degree of military action which was needed to stop Saddam, he would have to break with the UN coalition. Because there was no threat of

⁴² John R. Bolton, "The U.N. Rewards Saddam." *Weekly Standard*, December 15, 1997, 14

⁴³ John R. Bolton, "Congress Versus Iraq." *Weekly Standard*, January 19, 1998, 16

⁴⁴ John R. Bolton, "Adrift in the Gulf." *Weekly Standard*, March 23, 1998, 10

⁴⁵ Charles Krauthammer, "Let's Hope He's Lying." *Weekly Standard*, March 2, 1998, 8

⁴⁶ Robert Kagan, "Saddam's Impending Victory." *Weekly Standard*, February 2, 1998, 22

serious repercussions against Iraq, like the parties in Bosnia before, Saddam would have no incentive to adjust his behavior. For Kagan the best diplomacy was to escalate.

The Clinton Iraq policy was beginning to lose Congressional support. In February 1998 secretary of defense William Cohen stated that the U.S. goal was not to topple Saddam Hussein, but to do what the United Nations has said in its declarations.⁴⁷ Secretary of State Madeleine Albright advocated something similar in a November Foreign Affairs essay, when she wrote that the goal of the administration was to keep Iraq in a “strategic box” while letting the Security Council resolutions run its course.⁴⁸ In October the same year Clinton signed into law the Iraq Liberation Act, which made regime change in Iraq the official U.S. policy. A month before, UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, resigned in protest against Washington’s unwillingness to have Iraq abide by the Security Council resolutions, saying that Iraq could have WMDs and means of delivery within months.⁴⁹ This was the beginning of a new phase in the *Standard’s* formulation of an Iraq strategy where they began advocating methods for action.

The same month Robert Kagan embraced what he described as the ‘Wolfowitz plan,’ which called for the establishment of a ‘liberated zone’ in southern Iraq.⁵⁰ This zone would be a safe haven where opponents of the Iraqi regime could gather and build a provisional government which would become an alternative to Saddam. It would provide a staging area for defected military units, and access to the country’s largest oil fields. This would not be an easy way out as it would demand a serious military commitment from the U.S. A month later, as Clinton was preparing another bombing run in retaliation for Saddam sabotaging the course of the inspections, a *Weekly Standard* editorial denounced his strategy for being risk-free, but ineffective.⁵¹ They once again recommended the Wolfowitz plan, which they admitted would probably have the need for ground troops to be implemented. After the four day bombing run, codenamed Operation Desert Fox, both Bolton and an editorial immediately declared it a fiasco. Bolton felt that Clinton in his speech made a compelling case for why the U.S. should have bombed Iraq three years before.⁵² The bombing itself was squeezed between the publication of the UN weapons inspectors report and the beginning of Ramadan. This made the bombing less severe than Saddam had feared, but it still blew the coalition apart with

⁴⁷ “Attack Iraq.” *Weekly Standard*, March 2, 1998, 7

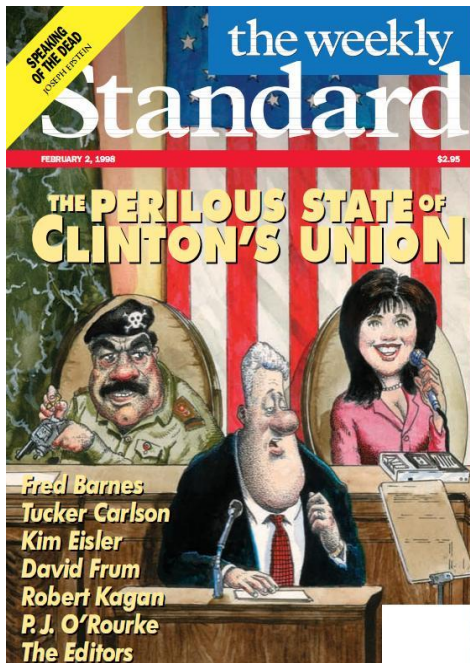
⁴⁸ Madeleine Albright, “The Testing of American Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Affairs*, Nov./Dec., 1998: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/54600/madeleine-k-albright/the-testing-of-american-foreign-policy?page=show> (accessed 10.21.2012)

⁴⁹ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/july-dec98/ritter_8-31.html

⁵⁰ Robert Kagan, “A Way to Oust Saddam.” *Weekly Standard*, September 28, 1998, 14

⁵¹ “How to Attack Iraq.” *Weekly Standard*, November 16, 1998, 17

⁵² John R. Bolton, “Bombing Before Ramadan.” *Weekly Standard*, December 28, 1998, 18



France, Russia and China distancing themselves from the U.S. position. The editorial declared the ‘strategic box’ to be unraveling.⁵³ The alternative once again was the Wolfowitz plan, or even a full scale invasion of Iraq.

Meanwhile *Foreign Affairs* had been silent on the Iraq issue, but in the January/February edition the two Middle East experts Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, together with Gideon Rose who formerly sat in Clinton’s National Security Council, wrote an essay meant to deal specifically with the Wolfowitz plan.⁵⁴ Named “The Rollback Fantasy” the essay took on what they saw as having become the leading alternative to

the Clinton policy, driven by magazines like the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *Commentary*, and *The New Republic*. To establish enclaves by air support would require around four times the number of air sorties as in the Gulf War (or twice the number that flew in the 1999 Kosovo war). This, Pollack and Rose argued, was not feasible and the better solution was “to keep Saddam in his box” or simply end the sanctions in exchange for a blanket authorization for future strikes. Unfortunately this essay oversimplified the position of the *Weekly Standard* which had always seen the need for some ground forces in the vicinity of the liberated zones in order to stave off possible attacks. The concept of a blanket authorization for U.S. air strikes seemed like it had a high risk of running into problems of Security Council support down the road. Kagan’s reply was that Clinton’s box had unraveled.⁵⁵ Without a united front in the Security Council, without the administration even contemplating regime change, and now without the threat of a major bombing campaign after Desert Fox, the sanction regime was destined to deteriorate.

There was no further development in the *Standard’s* view on Iraq during the rest of the Clinton period. The war over Kosovo captured the foreign policy columns and made Iraq a marginal issue for the rest of the Clinton’s term. In December 1999 John R. Bolton returned to Iraq with an article that seemed much like a rerun. Bolton wrote that “now it should be beyond debate that only Saddam’s removal can realistically forestall Iraq’s ability to produce

⁵³ “The End of the Clinton Iraq Policy.” *Weekly Standard*, December 28, 1998, 8

⁵⁴ Daniel Byman, Kenneth Pollack, and Gideon Rose, “The Rollback Fantasy.” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 1999

⁵⁵ Robert Kagan. “Saddam Wins – Again.” *Weekly Standard*, January 4, 1999, 14

weapons of mass destruction.”⁵⁶ The developments of the late 1990s had consolidated the *Weekly Standard’s* view that there could be no solution that did not at one point include regime change.

The Kosovo War

The situation in the Balkans had been a side issue ever since the civil war in Bosnia turned into the still fragile, but effective framework of the Dayton agreement. Following this the President of Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo) Slobodan Milosevic attempted to keep the goodwill of the West without giving up his hold on power within his country. Writing in February 1997 Robert Kagan acknowledged that Milosevic needed the West for economic support.⁵⁷ However, as the demands of the West threatened Milosevic’s hold on power, Kagan believed he would once again consider going rogue rather than allow a powerful opposition to develop. Unfortunately the U.S. policy was giving him too much room to maneuver. Kagan argued that the Clinton administration, as in Iraq, relied on an “inevitability theory of history,” in which they can avoid hard choices regarding dictatorships as the historic development favors liberal democracy. This was bad short-term policy because the situation in Balkan with Milosevic in charge would get much worse before it got better. The solution then, as was often the case with the *Weekly Standard*, was to push harder for regime change.

A year later the situation in Kosovo, the Southern part of Yugoslavia which had an Albanian majority and a Serbian minority, had escalated into a low-scale civil war between the Serbian Yugoslav army and the Kosovo Liberation Army guerrilla. A March 1998 article by the journalist Stephen Schwartz took a clear pro-Albanian stance by arguing how “[f]or the last nine years, the Albanians of Kosovo have lived in conditions worse than anything suffered by blacks in apartheid South Africa.”⁵⁸ This view was followed up in an editorial two months later in which Milosevic was described not as president, but as “Serbia’s top thug.”⁵⁹ Stefan Halper, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under Reagan, wrote that the problem with the Clinton administration was that they saw Milosevic as part of the solution rather than the core of the problem.⁶⁰ The sentiment was followed up by the diplomat Morton Abramowitz who warned of Milosevic’s tactic of seeming an indispensable part of a

⁵⁶ John R. Bolton, “Who Really Won the Gulf War?” *Weekly Standard*, December 27, 1999, 13

⁵⁷ Robert Kagan, “The ‘Inevitability’ Cop-Out.” *Weekly Standard*, February 10, 1997, 14

⁵⁸ Stephen Schwartz, “Milosevic Murders Again.” *Weekly Standard*, March 23, 1998, 27

⁵⁹ “Clinton’s Feckless Foreign Policy.” *Weekly Standard*, May 25, 1998, 11

⁶⁰ Stefan Halper, “The Solution in Kosovo: Milosevic Must Go.” *Weekly Standard*, July 27, 1998, 24

solution.⁶¹ In contrast with the mission in Bosnia the *Standard* now found itself with prominent Republican allies, most notably Senator John McCain who called for a tougher line than Clinton's hesitant 'threat of force' policy.⁶² For the first time since the *Weekly Standard* began publishing there finally was a solid resonance for the policy suggestions made by the magazine, within the Republican Party.



In February 1999 the conflict escalated with the collapse of an agreement made with Milosevic. As a comment Robert Kagan wrote how the Clinton administration's constant use of 'threat of force' as a key tool of policy was both tempting hostile nations to call the President's bluff, or waiting to see if the military force would be substantial, or more of a symbolic action with minimal damage.⁶³ The underlying argument, which was one recurring in the pages of the *Standard*, was that if a president used military force in an unpredictable way, like Nixon's 'Christmas Bombings' against North Vietnam in 1972, or as decisive as Bush's Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. would soon face fewer crises created by hostile small powers. For the neoconservatives the lesson of Vietnam was that gradual intensifying military action in order to convince an adversary to alter his opinion, which was Robert McNamara's main strategy, would only tempt the adversary to test the limits of U.S. commitment.⁶⁴ What would work was using the full extent of U.S. military capability in order to deter hostile states in the future. Clinton's emulation of the McNamara philosophy, as the *Standard* saw it, was a main reason behind their calls for use of force and regime change bordering on the monotonous.

As push came to show the *Weekly Standard* found itself once again in the position of supporting the Clinton administration's use of military force against Milosevic, while the majority of House and Senate Republicans voted against it. A *Standard* editorial condemned the GOP as flirting with neo-isolationism, especially considering how they were wrong regarding the Bosnia intervention.⁶⁵ The editorial "Kosovo and the Republican Future" continued the criticism of the Republican's muddled response which could result in the

⁶¹ Morton Abramowitz, "Milosevic Wins Too." *Weekly Standard*, August 24, 15

⁶² "Foreign Policy and the Republican Future (II)." *Weekly Standard*, October 12, 1998, 7

⁶³ Robert Kagan, "Clinton's Kosovo Collapse." *Weekly Standard*, February 1, 1999, 15

⁶⁴ Herbert McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 62

⁶⁵ "Into Kosovo." *Weekly Standard*, March 1, 1999, 7

Democrats having the most credibility when it came to foreign policy.⁶⁶ Only this time they felt less lonely with Senator Jesse Helms declaring “Milosevic’s ouster ... the only real “exit strategy” in the Balkans.” Along with him were Senator McCain, Bob Dole and Jeanne Kirkpatrick. It is this event that made John McCain the *Weekly Standard’s* favorite statesman. From outright criticism during the Bosnia intervention, the *Standard* now credited McCain for “bold political leadership—the kind of leadership that shapes polls rather than follows them.”⁶⁷ In contrast with Clinton’s vague rhetoric of multilateral legitimacy for his actions, they perceived McCain as making the kind of Reaganite argument that staked out a course and made a moral argument for it, which the *Standard* felt as essential for building sustained support in the American public if the campaign should run into obstacles and loss of American lives. In the Kosovo war editorial, the *Standard* suggested to the president that victory would mean to liberate Kosovo, no return to status quo ante, and ultimately to drive Milosevic from power. For the *Weekly Standard* the crisis in the Balkans was a challenge that went beyond European regional security. “It may seem odd that this challenge is coming in a place that few Americans ever heard of,” the editorial proclaimed, “but then history has taught us that you rarely get to choose where to make your stand. Today the crisis in Kosovo has become one of those unlikely pivots in history.”

In the same issue, which was largely dedicated to Kosovo, Lawrence Kaplan argued that the experts overestimated the U.S. public’s reluctance to using ground troops.⁶⁸ If an administration made an effort to persuade the American people, they could be persuaded, as was shown before Desert Storm when people expected far more casualties than were to become the case. Kaplan concluded that only with ground troops available could American military power recover its utility as an instrument of national policy. The American Enterprise Institute scholar Jeffrey Gedmin confirmed the *Standard’s* long-standing argument that if America leads its allies will follow, as apparently Europe was seeing the U.S. as the essential promoter and defender of shared Western values (even the French).⁶⁹ The political philosopher Seth Cropsey noted that the security challenge in Panama vanished with the ouster of Noriega, and suggested this would likely happen should Milosevic be forced to step down.⁷⁰ Having faced years of frustration following Clinton’s Iraq policy, the magazine

⁶⁶ “Kosovo and the Republican Future.” *Weekly Standard*, April 5, 1999, 11

⁶⁷ “Win It.” *Weekly Standard*, April 9, 1999, 9

⁶⁸ Lawrence Kaplan, “The Will to Fight.” *Weekly Standard*, April 9, 1999, 13

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Gedmin, “Toasting NATO.” *Weekly Standard*, April 19, 1999, 14

⁷⁰ Seth Cropsey, “The Noriega Option.” *Weekly Standard*, April 19, 1999, 16

seemed determined to get the utmost affirmation out of this conflict. The issue is basically a tour d'horizon of the *Weekly Standard's* principles of foreign policy.

Although supportive of military action, the articles of the *Standard* immediately attacked the administration's handling of the war. The conservative pundit Tod Lindberg and scholar William Hawkins were both critical towards Clinton for his lack of a strategy beyond bombing.⁷¹ Especially Hawkins argued that as the Serbians were divided into small dug in units in order to avoid bombing damage, they were especially ripe targets for ground troops.⁷² Use of air force alone had little effect on a force that had no immediate need to move and could afford to outwait its opponent. An editorial one month later despaired over Clinton's indecisiveness and lack of a Republican effort to force his hand on the question of preparing a ground offensive.⁷³ Senator John McCain was quoted at length as he drew the analogy to the Vietnam War when, in his argument, the frequent bombing pauses served to undermine the U.S. negotiating position rather than bolster it.⁷⁴ McCain was now perfectly in sync with the *Standard* when he asked for a total congressional commitment to the war, and ended with asking "in this late hour, to put aside our reservations, our past animosities, and encourage, implore, cajole, beg, shame this administration into doing its duty." The *Standard* offensive is held up in further editorials and a rather speculative article by RAND researcher Cheryl Bernard named "Commander Interruptus," where Clinton's decisions to smoke marijuana but not inhale, or have an affair with no intercourse, were connected to his reluctance to use ground forces in Kosovo.⁷⁵ Apparently Clinton consistently believed "that refraining from the ultimate conclusion will allow him, when push comes to shove, to escape the ultimate sanction." In other words it was his deeply flawed character that prevented him from going all out against America's enemies.

Milosevic finally capitulated after more than three months of bombing. The *Weekly Standard* attributed the victory to the effect of long and sustained bombing, the Russian decision to distance themselves from Milosevic, but also Clinton's decision to finally consider mobilizing for a ground campaign.⁷⁶ For the *Standard* the war is seen as evidence that their approach to a tough foreign policy was the way to go. Faced with real American commitment, other powers like Russia in this case would inevitably choose to maintain a decent relationship with the U.S. over small fragile regional dictators. Also decisions to use ground

⁷¹ Tod Lindberg, "Bill Clinton's War?" *Weekly Standard*, April 26, 1999, 10

⁷² William R. Hawkins, "Go in on the Ground." *Weekly Standard*, April 26, 1999, 12

⁷³ "All Necessary Force." *Weekly Standard*, May 31, 1999, 9

⁷⁴ "McCain's Moment." *Weekly Standard*, May 17, 1999, 5

⁷⁵ Cheryl Bernard, "Commander Interruptus." *Weekly Standard*, May 31, 1999, 17

⁷⁶ "Victory." *Weekly Standard*, June 14, 1999, 11

forces could make the adversary give up even before these troops had to be used. All in all the more the U.S. showed a steadfast will to succeed, the better its chances of actually succeeding. For the *Weekly Standard* this was the main lesson of a decade of limited interventions.

Terrorism

There were also other conclusions drawn from the Clinton presidency. In a February 1999 article called “Dictatorship and No Standards” Lawrence Kaplan summed up the general view the magazine held of Clinton’s foreign policy.⁷⁷ Kaplan returned to the promise that Clinton would “enlarge the community of democracies,” a statement that appealed to many neoconservatives as a much needed alternative to the pragmatic Bush. Instead the administration seemed to have been similarly infected with the desire for stability. Kaplan cited the Iraq policy which he deemed ineffective because the administration feared the post-Saddam chaos more than they feared Saddam’s regime. He saw the same attitude regarding Indonesia, a minor topic for the *Weekly Standard*, but one where they criticized the administration for supporting Suharto’s dictatorship even as the pro-democracy forces gained momentum. Kaplan saw the problem as two-fold. For the authoritarian states that were doing well economically Clinton was easy on them because his legacy was wedded to the rising fortunes of American business. Diverging from the status quo could have the effect of disturbing trade relations with China, Indonesia or others. On the other side, if the authoritarian state was doing badly economically, the administration feared the chaos and violence that could follow regime change. When it came to Iraq specifically, Kaplan agreed that a “fragmented Iraq” could be the result of regime change, but Saddam had passed the threshold where he was a greater evil than a failed Iraqi state would be. With the strongest opposition groups in countries like Iraq and Serbia friendlier to the U.S. than the regime, the U.S. would get more leverage with a change of rulers.

The issue of terrorism, which would rise to prominence with the 9/11 attacks, was not widely covered in the pages of the *Standard*. But it is a lurking theme that was often mentioned in connection with the U.S. strategy towards Iraq. The first larger article about how the U.S. should respond to terrorism was by Zalmay Khalilzad, in the wake of the TWA Flight 800 disaster in July 1996 that killed 230 people. Although the FBI eventually concluded it was an accident, this was not known at the time Khalilzad wrote the article,

⁷⁷ Lawrence Kaplan, “Dictatorship and No Standards.” *Weekly Standard*, February 8, 1999, 27



which attempted to argue principally about what the proper response to large acts of terrorism should be. He suggested a doctrine of ‘disproportionate response’ against states that functioned as sponsors for terrorism.⁷⁸ This response would be a continuing use of force against its security forces, economic and communications infrastructure, until the state renounced terror and cooperated with the United States. Should they fail to do so, the U.S. should seriously consider regime change as an option. The U.S. should also “shrink the zones of chaos that foster terrorism,” which seemed to be another term for state-building.

Khalilzad mentioned Afghanistan as a failed state where the U.S. needed to create some kind of settlement that would bring stability.

A couple of years later William Hawkins uses the need to strike against terror groups as a key reason for rebuilding the Special Forces.⁷⁹ Some months later, after the U.S. bombing of the al Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, the conservative columnist Andrew McCarthy warned that the Clinton administration did not understand the threat posed by al Qaeda.⁸⁰ His argument was that instead of getting hung up on the merits of bombing that particular factory (the intelligence evidence was contested), the administration should instead have promoted it as a response against terrorists’ use of Sudan as a safe haven for their operations against the U.S. and its allies. McCarthy recommended treating terrorism as a military problem rather than a criminal-justice issue, and to build American military capability.

Less than a year before 9/11 the U.S. experienced the attack on the navy destroyer USS Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden by suicide bombers connected to al Qaeda, which killed seventeen American soldiers and wounded thirty-nine. For the *Weekly Standard* this showed once again that terrorism posed a danger to U.S. interests. In order to stress the need for action, and its disagreement with the Clinton administration’s tendency to treat terrorism as a criminal-justice issue, the *Standard* chose a dramatic “America at War” cover for their October 30, 2000 issue. The former CIA case officer Reuel Marc Gerech wrote how the

⁷⁸ Zalmay Khalilzad, “Six Steps Against Terror.” *Weekly Standard*, August 5

⁷⁹ William R. Hawkins, “Ground Troops Win Wars.” *Weekly Standard*, September 28, 1998, 27

⁸⁰ Andrew C. McCarthy, “The Sudan Connection.” *Weekly Standard*, November 2, 1998, 26

decision to let the FBI investigate the USS Cole bombing was not an effective way of dealing with terror, as they were reliant on the goodwill of Yemen to conduct the investigation.⁸¹ The reason for doing so, he argued, was that it offered foreign policy more wiggle room. Instead the terrorism issue should be put in the foreground in U.S. regional strategies, which meant meaningful threats against the Pakistani and Afghanistan governments. The fear that military responses to terrorist attacks could lead to an endless series of new attacks was understandable, but misguided. The determination and passion of terrorists, especially after the success of USS Cole, was so great that only vengeance could counter it. The deputy executive secretary for the *Weekly Standard* affiliated think-tank Project for the New American Century Tom Donnelly, similarly criticized Clinton for having lumped all kinds of terrorism into one confusing category by using phrases such as “brought to justice,” and “cowardly act of terrorism.”⁸² “Failing to see that we are at war,” he argued, “we also fail to see our enemies.” Their operation was clever, well planned and courageous, and should be treated as such. As long as the unipolar moment lasted, the enemies of the U.S. would use unconventional warfare to inflict real damage. This, Donnelly concluded, was why the military and the political leaders had to reorient themselves to combat terrorism with the same commitment they had in countering hostile states.

As with most of *Weekly Standard's* message, their views on terrorist threats were consistent throughout the Clinton period. There was a clear emphasis on, and belief in, the effect of military force. The threat posed by terrorist networks was taken seriously, but there was a clear bias towards linking them to states and particular regimes. Although there was a discussion about the pros and cons of regime change, the consequences of failed states, or development issues in general, received virtually no attention. On the other hand the *Standard* seemed willing to take a harder stance against dictatorships in general even when it had diplomatic and economic costs. When it came to U.S. friendly regimes, like Saudi-Arabia, Yemen and Pakistan, which also supported or harbored terrorist organizations, various administrations including Clinton's had been reluctant to challenge them outright, which made the decision to tolerate terrorist cells or terrorist funding largely a domestic or regional consideration. In the *Standard's* position there could be no real solution to the problem without confrontation, diplomatic or otherwise. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses in the argument, it provided a clear framework for action in the post-9/11 world.

⁸¹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “G-Men East of Suez.” *Weekly Standard*, October 30, 2000, 26

⁸² Tom Donnelly, “America at War.” *Weekly Standard*, October 30, 2000, 11

Constructing a New National Identity

As was formulated in the Kristol/Kagan essay in *Foreign Affairs*, the *Weekly Standard* also had an agenda to influence the political philosophy of the Republican Party. Within the pages of the *Standard* that mission usually fell to senior editor David Brooks. His central message was that if the GOP managed to articulate an idea of citizenship and national destiny, it could retake the lead in government activism that the Democrats had held since F.D.R. In his argument the Republican Party, going back to Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, has sought to balance individual opportunity with national, political and cultural union.⁸³ To achieve the dismantling of the Liberal welfare state, without destroying social cohesion or the respect of the state itself, the Conservatives should look to T.R. According to Brooks, Theodore Roosevelt believed a dynamic federal government was needed to hold together America's heroic and rambunctious innovators. Roosevelt opposed nativism, but was also against ethnic voting and hyphenated Americanism. His philosophy had consequences in the realm of foreign policy as well, as he believed an active foreign policy gave a sense of shared values and national character. For him, a nation as well as an individual had a moral responsibility, and foreign interests could not be defined by economic considerations alone. Brooks continued by arguing how a Roosevelt would use "public money to express a unifying American creed and to make manifest American glory." His environmentalism sought to balance the needs of individuals with the needs of future Americans. For Brooks the current Republican Party had given away the language of nationalism to the likes of the reactionary Pat Buchanan, when it could provide them with a vessel for articulating policies for the future.

The legacy of Theodore Roosevelt was revisited in April 1999, and this time in connection with Senator John McCain, and his use of patriotic rhetoric when arguing for U.S. involvement in the Kosovo War.⁸⁴ "Patriotism has been the most tongue-tied of the sentiments," Brooks told the readers. After the First World War the boisterous 19th Century nationalism was gradually replaced by small-scale morality, but McCain was now tentatively looking for "a new, crunchier patriotism as a way to heal our cultural woes." Perhaps, Brooks



⁸³ David Brooks, "Bully for America." *Weekly Standard*, June 23, 1997, 14

⁸⁴ David Brooks, "Politics and Patriotism." *Weekly Standard*, April 26, 1999, 16

wonderws, there was a place for T.R. style patriotism now that the end of the Cold War has put an end to one of the great projects of the American nation, just as the closing of the frontier marked a similar end in Roosevelt's time. For Theodore Roosevelt, healthy patriotism and foreign policy activism was a sound remedy for cultural threats at home, and Brooks saw it as a better alternative than multiculturalism which he thought had failed as an effective public philosophy. According to Brooks, McCain still had no central narrative, and no public philosophy to explain America's purpose, but he was exploring the message of national pride.

As the GOP presidential campaigns began rolling Brooks noted with satisfaction that there was a new kind of "one nation conservatism" in both the Bush and McCain campaigns.⁸⁵ Both Bush's 'Compassionate Conservatism' and McCain with his 'New Patriotic Challenge' were seen as fresh visions for the Republican Party. The 'leave us alone' attitude of the Gingrich decade was seen as a destructive mindset by both candidates. Brooks noted that if it failed, Bush plans would be nothing more than another dose of 'Thousand Points of Light' symbolism, but currently it was pointing towards something more radical, an across-the-board effort to revive responsible citizenship through religious and community institutions. McCain's vision, Brooks argued, was complimentary with its emphasis on foreign policy activism and reforming political institutions towards something that evoked pride in the American people.

Compared with the 1996 Republican primary the *Weekly Standard* articles generally showed an enthusiastic approval for both front-runner George W. Bush and challenger John McCain. But there was little doubt that when it came to Senator McCain the magazine had finally found their 'Scoop' Jackson candidate. Unlike other politicians he was not only referred to, but often quoted at length. David Brooks was mostly alone in widening the scope beyond the realm of policy, but all his long articles were given the front cover which is a good indication that his sentiments were broadly shared throughout the *Standard*. Brooks' writings reached back to the first generation of neoconservatives and their concern about the lack of coherence of culture in modern society. Daniel Bell argued that the traditional cultural characteristics of Americanism that reined in the materialist hedonism of capitalism had been eroded, leaving hedonism triumphant.⁸⁶ Irving Kristol similarly worried that a culture which rejected the merits of bourgeois society would end up undermining its values.⁸⁷ This link between culture and polity is a clear concern for other *Standard* writers as well. In an

⁸⁵ David Brooks, "One Nation Conservatism." *Weekly Standard*, September 13, 1999, 23

⁸⁶ Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 281

⁸⁷ Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 123-135

interesting editorial concerning the murder of Cassie Bernall, one of the victims of the Columbine school massacre who confirmed her faith in God even when threatened by the shooters, she was held up as a contrast to the ‘it depends’ worldview of modern society.⁸⁸ Leo Strauss was referenced with his suggestion that we can “only ascend from the dead-end of Machiavellian modernity by returning to an earlier notion of the primacy of the good.” Jeffrey Bell (who may or may not be inspired by Strauss) explains the contrast between Machiavelli’s (and more clearly Hegel’s) approach which is rooted in the centrality of conflict as the animating force of political change, versus the belief in ‘self-evident truths’ which follows from a belief in universal natural law taking priority over the founding of any state.⁸⁹ The attraction of American exceptionalism is its claim to universality, a sentiment that according to Bell is cardinal amongst social conservatives who link the self-evident truths of the American Declaration of Independence with the equally self-evident truths emanating from God.⁹⁰ As explained in Chapter Two, Straussian thought considers a certain amount of self-evident truths needed in order to keep a society together.

If we accept the idea that the *Weekly Standard* was influenced by Straussian ideas it was natural for its writers to promote moral clarity in foreign affairs as a good in itself, because it strengthened the belief in the universal truths and values that are so central in American nationalism. The hyperbole that characterized the covering of America’s global challenges in the relatively benign 1990s is consistent with the belief that existential threats remind people of their shared values. Critics like Shadia Drury see fascist tendencies where Straussians see affection for both American values and its liberal society. Brooks’ enthusiasm for a more nation-oriented political discourse can be viewed as either a call for nationalism or a sound concern that the American polity is breaking apart. Returning to Kissinger’s dichotomy between Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the *Weekly Standard* seems to embrace Roosevelt’s language and methods, but based on a fundamentally Wilsonian moral rationale. Robert Kagan would probably have preferred a term like Lincolnianism, which pushes the Declaration of Independence to the center of how America defines its interests at home and abroad.⁹¹ Whatever its ultimate intentions, the *Standard* consistently framed U.S. foreign policy and its challenges in a way that seriously affected how the magazine interpreted the event of 9/11 and the following War on Terror.

⁸⁸ “Good and Evil in Littleton.” *Weekly Standard*, May 10, 1999, 7

⁸⁹ Jeffrey Bell, *The Case for Polarized Politics* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 161 / 180

⁹⁰ Jeffrey Bell, *The Case for Polarized Politics* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 127 / 197

⁹¹ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 262 (the neologism ‘Lincolnianism’ is the author’s invention)

Chapter Four

The War on Terror

Republicans in the White House

“Clinton did surprisingly little harm to the economy,” economist Irwin Stelzer grudgingly admitted as the Clinton period came to an end.¹ In fact the US had enjoyed a continuous economic boom during Clinton’s period, and whether it originated in Reagan reforms, technological changes or White House leadership, at least the Clinton administration had done nothing to inhibit it. With the economic issue favoring the Democrats, the *Weekly Standard* argued that the solution for Bush was to emphasize the ‘vision thing’ that both George H. W. Bush and Clinton had neglected. “David was perhaps always a bit more ‘Hamiltonian’ on the role of government,” William Kristol wrote of his former co-editor, but leading up to the 2000 election Brooks’ ideas on constructing identity and national purpose fitted well with the *Standard’s* general sense of purpose, as well as with Bush’s image.²

During the 1990s the writers of the *Weekly Standard* had tried to promote a positive conservative vision inside the Republican discourse. “There wasn’t a weekly conservative magazine based in Washington that could report in detail on government and politics, but that also could have a broad cultural and political perspective,” Kristol argued. “It was a new era that required fresh thinking ... Liberalism was exhausted [but] conservatism wasn’t yet quite up to being a governing movement.” The Gingrich movement was too negative towards the Federal government and governance itself, which was good enough for a Congressional insurgency, but far less suited for the Presidency. Secondly, according to President of the National Rifle Association David Keene, Bill Kristol saw in the years after the fall of the Soviet Union a need for some kind of national crusade “because a nation is judged not how it treats its people, but how it behaves on the world stage.”³ In other words the Jeffersonian fostering of virtues at home was not enough for a nation like the US. It needed to involve



¹ Irwin Stelzer, “What Clinton Did to the Economy.” *Weekly Standard*, January 15, 2001, 17

² E-mail correspondence with William Kristol 4/23/2012

³ David Keene, guest lecture at Citadel Military College in Charleston, SC, July 7, 2012 (1h 13m into the lecture)

itself, both to secure a world benign to American interests and values, but involvement should also create fear and awe in potential adversaries. This sentiment was in accord with Brooks' message on Roosevelt and American nationalism and seemed to be a cornerstone in the *Weekly Standard's* philosophy.

In September 2000 an editorial by Brooks and Kristol argued that the Republicans should focus on the rule of law, America's mission in the world and the renewal of American citizenship.⁴ The *Weekly Standard* supported Bush's Compassionate Conservatism concept wholeheartedly, including the faith based initiative which ended up being led by *Standard* writer John DiIulio Jr. Bush foreign policy is attacked as a Democrat-light attitude towards US commitment abroad, breaking with the tradition that brought Eisenhower, Nixon and Reagan to victory. Finally the emphasis on 'rule of law' stands out as the least high minded as it was really about character, which the lack of apparently led the Clinton administration to "corrupt the legal process for its own petty and political advantage." It is worth noting that while the issue of foreign policy will be discussed below, the concept of Compassionate Conservatism ended up being a disappointment, and DiIulio resigned after only eight months in protest against the way the faith-based initiative was shamelessly used as an empty symbolic gesture to the social conservative base.⁵

At the time however the *Standard* met Bush's first six months of domestic initiatives with general enthusiasm. Foreign policy initiatives on the other hand failed to impress. Robert Kagan and Kristol viewed the China policy as far too soft.⁶ The harshest criticism is reserved for the defense budget. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld asked for thirty-five billion dollars extra to maintain military capability, and got eighteen. The editorial advice from the *Weekly Standard* to "two old friends," Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, was to resign in protest.⁷ The subject of the armed forces is interesting because it is an issue where the *Standard* had a consistent interest. What then were the realistic goals of a defense friendly magazine like the *Weekly Standard*? If the goal was to influence policy the discourse should acknowledge the complexities inherent in a subject as military organization. On the other hand, if the goal was to influence public or party opinion the issue should be framed in measurable terms, like more money. The contrast between the *Standard's* 'more money' message and Rumsfeld's own reflections is striking. Rumsfeld focused entirely on what he saw as a bloated bureaucracy, lack of cooperation between branches, no civilian control with promotions, and a deployment

⁴ David Brooks and William Kristol, "The High Road to High Office." *Weekly Standard*, September 25, 2000, 11

⁵ <http://www.esquire.com/features/dilulio>

⁶ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "The 'Adults' Make a Mess." *Weekly Standard*, May 14, 2001, 11

⁷ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "No Defense." *Weekly Standard*, July 23, 2001, 11

and R&D strategy that was rooted in the Cold War.⁸ He knew defense was not Bush's priority number one when he took the job.⁹ On the issue of defense the *Weekly Standard* was stuck in campaign mode and sacrificing complexity in order to keep up pressure on the funding issue.

The magazine seemed to be less interested in the nuts and bolts of American hegemony than to establish a reason for its existence. In yet another criticism of "the unrealistic realism of Henry Kissinger," historian and writer on foreign policy Max Boot noted how realists always believe democracy is best suited for the countries where it is currently present. "It doesn't seem to occur to Kissinger that ... the conflicts in the Middle East are about the lack of democracy and its attendant freedoms in the Arab world," Boot argued.¹⁰ According to Boot, policies like the détente between the US and the Soviet Union, and the Oslo agreement in the Middle East, were prone to failure because they were between a democracy and a dictatorship. Dictatorships need a certain amount of foreign threat to survive and will never move fully towards a resolution of conflict. Only when the Middle East becomes democratic, Boot continued, will its governments be able to strike fundamental deals that goes beyond conflict management. When it comes to actual policy recommendation Reuel Marc Gerecht scolded Rumsfeld for inspiring more terrorists by withdrawing forces from Jordan, providing Al-Qaida with some long sought positive results following last year's Cole bombing.¹¹ Gerecht's suggestion was to change the rules of engagement towards a less cautious approach rather than minimize exposure to risk. In hindsight this attitude towards risk-management was probably not that different from Rumsfeld's own. Reminiscing about Beirut and his first dealings with terrorism, Rumsfeld argued that "terrorism is a form of warfare and should be treated as such," and as he experienced in Beirut that while hunkering down inside the base, and constructing a defensive response to terrorist attacks, the methods of attack changed and evolved: "There is not any way to simply defend ... that means you got to go on the offense."¹² What differed between the views of Gerecht and other *Weekly Standard* writers, compared to Rumsfeld, was not the strategy, but the definition of what were crucial American interests. This definition changed dramatically after 9/11.

As priorities shifted after 9/11, just how much influence could the *Weekly Standard* hope to have? A *New York Times* article from March 2003 indicated that the magazine, despite a modest circulation of 55,000, had been widely successful in reaching decision

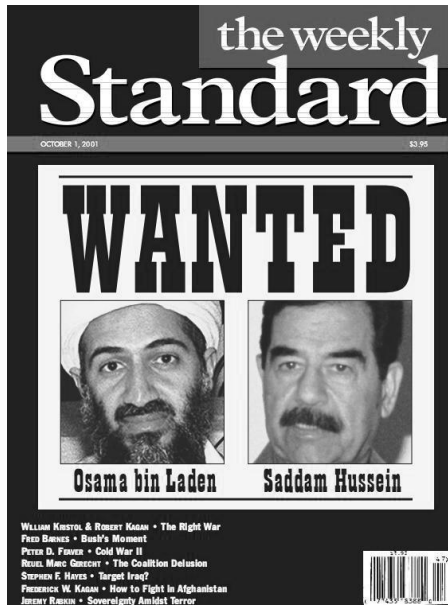
⁸ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 290-304

⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 331

¹⁰ Max Boot, "The Unrealistic Realism of Henry Kissinger." *Weekly Standard*, June 18, 2001, 31

¹¹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, "A Cowering Superpower." *Weekly Standard*, July 30, 2001

¹² "Donald Rumsfeld on the Bush Doctrine", *C-SPAN American History Podcast*, April 14 2012



makers both in Congress and in the White House.¹³ David Plotz, the Washington bureau chief of Slate, is quoted as saying "The Weekly Standard is hugely influential in policy making, much more so than any other magazine," and according to William Kristol himself, the office of the Vice President picked up thirty magazines every Monday. During the Bush administration the advertisements in the magazine were more often than not policy oriented. They included ads for the continuation of the Crusader artillery system, assured that nuclear plants were as secure in the post-9/11 world as they had been before, and told of Fannie Mae's importance to fulfilling the American Dream. Unfortunately, because the digital archives does not include commercials during the 1990s, it is unknown if this was a change from the Clinton years.

The War on Terror and Afghanistan

The terror attacks on September 11, 2001 came as a shock to everyone. Rumsfeld noted that even the *New York Times* sounded unilateralist.¹⁴ The *Weekly Standard* however had in a sense been in crisis mode ever since the Cole bombing. So rather than the 'I told you so' editorial that could have been expected, the first post-9/11 editorial in the September 24 issue, simply wondered if the public opinion would return to complacency "a month from now, when the networks have gone back to regular programming," as they had after earlier attacks.¹⁵ For years their analysis had been that if the US took a defensive posture in Yemen or other places, the Al-Qaida would simply move their offensive to another place. A lot of people now thought that analysis had been vindicated, which meant an opportunity for influencing policymakers greater than ever before in the magazine's history. The editorial continued that some conflict in Afghanistan was probable, and supported a resumption of the newly abandoned two-war strategy. A short second editorial by Joseph Bottum, the books and art editor, argued that historically regime change had been the only permanent remedy against state-sponsored piracy and terrorism.¹⁶ While *The New York Times* and a lot of the other

¹³ David Carr, "White House Listen When Weekly Speaks." *The New York Times*, March 11, 2003 : <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/11/arts/white-house-listens-when-weekly-speaks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> / Wikipedia had the circulation at 105,000 as of December 2011.

¹⁴ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 350

¹⁵ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "A War to Win." *Weekly Standard*, September 24, 2001, 7

¹⁶ Joseph Bottum, "A Nation Mobilized." *Weekly Standard*, September 24, 2001, 8

media were gripped by the Jacksonian impulse to strike back, writers of the *Standard* attempted to take a sober long-term look. In an article named “What Our Enemies Want,” Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly viewed the attacks as a part of a long struggle over power in the Middle East.¹⁷ The more defensive the US got in that region, the more attacks would come against US interests in other parts of the world. Saddam’s Iraq may or may not have been involved directly, but there was still a Saddam/Bin Laden axis working against American regional hegemony. The argument was repeated on a more tactical level by Gerecht, who advocated that the US take down the most charismatic of their adversaries, and use massive military force in order to “restore our awe” in the eyes of the Middle East.¹⁸

Jeffrey Bell’s commentary attempted to say something about the immediate reactions on a cultural level. “At the moment, America fairly vibrates with an almost tribal sense of identity, a fraternal concern that can barely be contained,” Bell wrote.¹⁹ He noted the striking departure from previous policy as the US had now declared that its targets were not only the terrorists themselves, but even “any group or government inclined to support or sustain others like them in the future.” This major change was done without any real public debate, Bell continued, because a debate had been rendered unnecessary. The people who described a fractured nation were wrong, as the political system operated highly effective when it is necessary. Finally he rejected the comparisons to the Pearl Harbor bombing that shocked America into entering the Second World War: “We are not the unarmed and inexperienced America of 1941; we are a global colossus ... [W]e are not for a moment afraid of defeat.” It could be read as a warning against hubris, but it had the feeling of a call to arms. For the *Weekly Standard* the War on Terror had begun years ago, as an integral part of being the world’s only superpower. For the writers of the *Standard* the shock of September 11 showed itself not in any Jacksonian call for immediate action, but rather a slight inability to perceive that everything had changed, and that it was no longer business as usual in American foreign policy.

For President George W. Bush, one of the most important things in the days following 9/11 was to make it clear to both the American public, and the world, that the US had not just suffered from terrorist attacks, but embarked on a new kind of war, a war on terror.²⁰ The ‘War on Terror’ term was not properly coined until a September 20 speech to a joint session

¹⁷Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly, “What Our Enemies Want.” *Weekly Standard*, September 24, 2001, 8

¹⁸ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Bin Laden Beware.” *Weekly Standard*, September 24, 2001, 25

¹⁹ Jeffrey Bell, “The End of Illusions.” *Weekly Standard*, September 24, 2001, 10

²⁰ George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (London: Virgin Books, 2010), 140

of Congress.²¹ It had developed naturally as Bush needed to emphasize to Putin that the US would act no matter what, within what Russia saw as their sphere of interest in Central Asia. It also underlined the seriousness of the threat and the measures the administration felt was necessary to combat the terrorist threat. Rumsfeld was skeptical. While it signaled a will not just to treat terrorism as a law enforcement matter, he worried that it would overemphasize the military aspect rather than the diplomatic and ideological dimensions.²² He also predicted it would never be a clean end to the conflict as it had been with the Second World War. He tried himself, with the expression ‘struggle against violent extremists,’ but found that it stopped short of mentioning the central fact that the enemies were Islamists.

The *Weekly Standard* editorial commenting on Bush’s speech applauded the War on Terror terminology and interpreted it not only to be directed at terrorists, but “perhaps even more significantly, a war against the kinds of regimes that support and employ terrorism as a deadly weapon in their war against us.”²³ The editorial focused especially on the threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. It ended with an open letter to the President that stressed five main points: Support for military action in Afghanistan, the enforcement of the ‘Wolfowitz plan’ of establishing a safe zone in Iraq by military means, a halt to the U.S. support of the Palestinian National Authority until they act to stop terrorist attacks against Israel, harder measures against the Hezbollah organization, and finally a significant increase in the U.S. defense budget. Its long list of signatories was nearly a who’s who of the neo-conservative family, and included most of the signatories of the 1998 open letter to Clinton sent by the Project for the New American Century think tank, who had not taken a position within the Bush administration (including the later apostate Francis Fukuyama). Jeremy Rabkin, a professor of international law at Cornell University, followed up the editorial in the same issue in an article on sovereignty. He argued that any ‘war’ which was declared against abstractions, like drugs or poverty, was bound to collapse under the weight of conflicting policy interests and empty rhetoric.²⁴ Any terrorist had to operate within a state’s territory, and with the privilege of sovereignty the state is in return answerable to the countries targeted by terrorists operating from their territory. Contrary to the earlier consensus view that has dominated the *Standard*, Rabkin regarded the criteria as whether they cooperate with the US efforts to eliminate terrorists, and not get hung up in issues like democracies and human rights. He particularly mentioned Pakistan, a state that would be a challenge in the years to come.

²¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> / Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2003), 102

²² Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 352

²³ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, *The Weekly Standard*, October 1, 2001, 9

²⁴ Jeremy Rabkin, “Sovereignty Amidst Terror.” *The Weekly Standard*, October 1, 2001, 11

The emphasis on states and their regimes, rather than terrorist groups, was not uncontroversial among American foreign policy thinkers. In a *Foreign Affairs* essay by William Perry, former Secretary of Defense under Clinton, and written not long after 9/11, he emphasized multilateral and bilateral agreements like the Non Proliferation Treaty and START, as the key to prevent weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) from getting in the hand of terrorists.²⁵ He also suggested an improved and well financed intelligence service to anticipate looming threats. While he accounted for hostile states, which under a “mentally unbalanced” leader could attack directly or support a terrorist organization, he did not even mention the use of regime change as a possible preventive tool. Looking back in *America Alone*, Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clark suggests that neo-conservatism ever since its birth had been fixated on the “classic struggle of preeminence among sovereign states, [which] is a questionable model for the threat of terrorism.”²⁶ While that may or may not be true the proposals made by the old guard like William Perry indicated a defensive approach that did not resonate well either with President Bush’s action oriented leadership nor Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s earlier experiences with terrorist organizations. At the time both the US military and the government apparatus were more comfortable dealing with challenges that centered on states rather than entrepreneurial Non Governmental Organizations (NGO). The *Weekly Standard* had placed these new challenges in a traditional context for years and thus offered a clear policy. Secondly their idealistic bent appealed to a President that was open to arguments based on moral standings. As Bob Woodward noted during his many conversations with the President, he would often become emotional when talking about regimes blatantly disregarding human rights. “It is visceral,” Bush admitted when talking about North Korea, “maybe it is my religion ... either you believe in freedom, and want to – and worry about the human condition, or you don’t.”²⁷ In the pages of the *Standard*, Fred Barnes noted early on that bush defined the War on Terror broadly in a language filled with religious terms, using the word evil frequently.²⁸ If there



²⁵ William J Perry, “Preparing for the Next Attack,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 2001

²⁶ Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clark, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 110

²⁷ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2003), 340

²⁸ Fred Barnes, “Man With a Mission.” *The Weekly Standard*, October 8, 2001, 11

ever was a period where the *Weekly Standard's* thinking about foreign policy could influence key policy makers, this was it.

From the time before 9/11 both Paul Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld were seen by most *Standard* writers as their 'allies' within the administration. Stephen Hayes noted what he saw as a distinct Wolfowitz imprint on Bush's September 20th speech through its emphasis on governments.²⁹ Inside the administration things were a bit different. In the first strategic meeting after 9/11 on September 15th Rumsfeld let Wolfowitz do most of the talking on behalf of the Defense Department. He chose to talk almost exclusively about Iraq rather than Afghanistan, which he perceived as a more difficult target in terms of military manpower.³⁰ Instead, the toppling of the weakened regime in Baghdad could be the shortcut to success in the struggle against militant Islamists. Both Bush's Chief of Staff Andy Card and his National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice thought this speech was a huge distraction, threatening to bring the whole discussion out of focus.³¹ Bush himself remembered the incident in a more positive light, but also found the sudden jump in focus slightly odd.³² In the end the emphasis on states in the launching of the War on Terror came as the administration realized the US needed to cooperate with governments outside its usual comfort zone, like Pakistan, Yemen, and Uzbekistan, to mention a few. Several of these states would face instability when confronting their radical elements. So the definition became broader as the US sought to, in Rice's words, "establishing the worldwide dragnet that we needed to stabilize the international system and secure the United States and its allies."³³ A 'mission creep' on the strategic level had begun that inevitably would strengthen people with the most expansive arguments, and weaken those, like Secretary of State Colin Powell, who held on to a narrow view of what the War on Terror was about.

The Truman analogy, that would prove a comfort for the administration and its supporters in the turbulent years to come, was an essential part of the *Weekly Standard's* vocabulary from the early days after 9/11. Similarly to Bell, military historian Frederick Kagan also suggested how the comparison to Pearl Harbor was misguided.³⁴ The attack from Japan led to four intense years of all-out warfare followed by a rapid demobilization afterwards. The attack in 1950 by North Korea on the US ally South Korea on the other hand was immediately seen in a broader context. The long-term will to fight in various conflicts

²⁹ Stephen Hayes, "Target Iraq?" *The Weekly Standard*, October 1, 2001, 23

³⁰ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2003), 83

³¹ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 86

³² George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (London, Virgin Books, 2010), 189

³³ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 98

³⁴ Frederick Kagan, "The Korean Parallel." *The Weekly Standard*, October 8, 2001, 16

large and small was accompanied by a modernization of the military, enabling it to meet the new challenge. In the following issue's cover story Max Boot criticized Pat Buchanan's analysis that the United States need to be "a republic, not an empire" in order to avoid similar attacks as 9/11.³⁵ In Boot's argument the measured realpolitik was what brought the US into dire straits. After supplying the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan with weapons as a part of the Cold War strategy, the statesmen of the first Bush administration abandoned Afghanistan, because it no longer had strategic value. The result was the rise of a fanatical regime driven by a hatred of modernity and its most visible avatar, the United States of America. The alternative would be to take responsibility and see things through as was done in Bosnia, where NATO worked to permanently defuse the potential for conflict. The liberal imperialism that the U.S. showed in Bosnia, Boot continued, was the responsible way for a great power to act; a temporary expedient until a responsible and humane regime took over. In Boot's view the realpolitik America had practiced, in order to gain and keep hegemony in the Middle East, had weakened the long-term support amongst regular Arab people who saw the U.S. allying with repressive regimes if it was in their interest. Regime change and democratization should be seen as a long-term strategic benefit. The perhaps most ambitious of the early articles on the subject was written by the less frequent contributor to the *Standard*, Charles Krauthammer. What the War on Terror had shown, he argued, was that in the face of radical Islamism, great regional powers like Russia and India had parallel interests.³⁶ With a neutral China this meant that there were no great powers on the wrong side of the new divide. This "hyper-polarity" was unprecedented and could, if the War on Terror was successful, lead to an expansion of the American sphere of peace, a Pax Americana, to include Central- and South Asia. Where Clinton failed in creating a system of norms, Bush could succeed with the mix of activist military power combined with a liberal framework. The message emphasized repeatedly in the pages of the *Weekly Standard* was that this was the world America had made, and that if the U.S. was to continue enjoying the benefits of this world order it had no other choice but to do continuous maintenance. America's position had in many aspects moved beyond the realist framework, as the U.S. was the chief architect of the international order, and thus in a sense had national interests everywhere.

This invocation of the term empire was to be one of the few foreign policy themes that sparked disagreement in the pages of the *Standard*. Kimberly Kagan, wife of Frederick Kagan and a military historian in her own right, argued that the U.S. did not behave like an empire,

³⁵ Max Boot, "The Case for American Empire." *The Weekly Standard*, October 15, 2001, 27

³⁶ Charles Krauthammer, "The Real New World Order." *The Weekly Standard*, November 12, 2001, 25



but like a hegemon; a leader of free people.³⁷ The U.S. should continue to allow the countries in its sphere to make its own alliances, pursue its own interests and let them make its own policies towards vis-à-vis each other, Kagan argued. The U.S are believers in democracy, and skeptical towards too binding supra-national authority, because this counteract autocracy and subjugation. This principled stance was radically different from any empire in world history, she concluded. Sean McMeekin, an American teaching at a Turkish university, suggested that classic empires had turned political elites against each other, in order to make their presence indispensable.³⁸ This had rarely been the goal of American policy, and should not be the policy towards the failed states it now was trying to mend. He believed the U.S. should stick with its successful formula of spreading the creed of modernity through the establishment of vibrant grass-clad university campuses, and Americanized consumption. The musings in the *Standard* concerning empire is similar to the imperial discussion in *Foreign Affairs* in that few can agree of a common definition of empire, beyond the fascination for the term itself.

At the time however the invasion of Afghanistan was what occupied the administration first and foremost. When it comes to the tactical level there is an enormous difference between being inside and outside the loop, and the possibility for outsiders to influence policy is small. To quote Donald Rumsfeld, he said that as Secretary of Defense he had “talked to enough people who had been in important jobs, who thought they were current, and were not.”³⁹ As the campaign developed, the editorial team of William Kristol and Robert Kagan complained that progress against Taliban was too slow. Within the administration, Powell and the State Department continued to raise the question of who would run the country after the Taliban, realizing there was no obvious answer at that moment. “Do we want to take [Kabul]?” Powell asked in an October 9 NSC meeting.⁴⁰ “Do we want to hold it? If we want to hold it, what are we going to do about it?” Kristol and Kagan’s answer was that there would be no Afghan consensus before Taliban falls, because everyone was plotting for

³⁷ Kimberly Kagan, “Hegemony, not Empire.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 6, 2002, 16

³⁸ Sean McMeekin, “The Unimperial Empire.” *The Weekly Standard*, June 23, 2003, 26

³⁹ Donald Rumsfeld on the Bush Doctrine”, *C-SPAN American History Podcast*, April 14, 2012

⁴⁰ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2003), 219

maximum advantage.⁴¹ They continued that momentum was essential for attracting support within Afghanistan and outside, and that the important thing, rather than finding ‘moderate’ Taliban to negotiate with, was to beat them decisively before the winter set in. According to Woodward’s inside account of the campaign, none of the main actors shared the *Weekly Standard’s* viewpoint. Rumsfeld pushed for a quick victory, but was highly reluctant for America to get committed to nation building.⁴² For him Afghanistan was only a part of the interrelated set of threats that made up the War on Terror. Powell on the other hand saw the Taliban threat as a result of U.S. negligence after the Soviet pulled out.⁴³ This, combined with his ‘you break it, you own it’ philosophy, made him want all the pieces lined up before the Taliban fell. A wish that proved unrealistic as American bombing made the Taliban evacuate Kabul on the night of November 12, which enabled the Northern Alliance to take the city as the administration was still debating what to do about it. After this the campaign progressed rapidly and the U.S. seemed to be stuck with Hamid Karzai, the only Pashtun they had any real contact with. The new leader had to be a Pashtun from the south because it was the largest of the minorities within Afghanistan, and the south was their heartland.⁴⁴

Until now the *Standard* had unanimously been supporting Rumsfeld against what they saw as untimely interference from the State Department. Now as the war was moving into a new phase this old allegiance would come under pressure. Even as Kabul fell, Frederick Kagan, along with Kristol’s and Robert Kagan’s editorial, wrote derisively about the statement made by the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, General Tommy Franks. “We are not occupying strategic terrain like Mazar-e-Sharif or like Kandahar ... That is not our approach,” Franks was quoted saying, because avoiding the cities would mean “the easiest exit strategy we’ve had in years.”⁴⁵ This, Frederick Kagan argued, was the cycle of fear that had restricted American strategy ever since the disaster of Mogadishu in 1993. This was not a time for fear, he continued, there was no good endgame for this conflict that did not involve nation building. Even as the Taliban was toppled with only 426 U.S. soldiers on the ground, he estimated that at least fifty thousand troops would be needed to achieve stability (a number that was not reached until 2009⁴⁶). The week after Tom Donnelly argued that despite what Rumsfeld said, “recent history in the Balkans revealed that the success of peacekeeping

⁴¹ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, *The Weekly Standard*, November 12, 2001, 9

⁴² Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2003), 220

⁴³ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2003), 275

⁴⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed on 9.27.2012)

⁴⁵ Frederick Kagan, “Fear Not the Taliban.” *The Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2001, 9

⁴⁶ Amy Belasco, “Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012” Congressional Research Service, 2009, 9 (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf> : Accessed on 9.27.2012)

operations depended on American leadership and almost always on the presence—the long-term and large-scale presence—of U.S. troops.”⁴⁷ At the same time Donnelly argued for going forward with a plan for invading Iraq, which would be made possible by an increase in the size of the army of fifty thousand soldiers, roughly a ten percent increase in manpower (also a number reached around 2009). Donald Rumsfeld was in total agreement with the *Weekly Standard’s* editorial line regarding the ousting of Taliban. “Success required recognizing that defeating the Taliban regime had to be a goal, rather than preserving it to avoid chaos . . . Afghan reconstruction (and rehabilitation of ‘good’ Taliban) could only come after the defeat of the Taliban regime,” Rumsfeld wrote in a memo to Vice President Dick Cheney in May 2002 on his thinking during the campaign.⁴⁸ The disagreement was on how this reconstruction would work. A large number of boots on the ground ran counter to Donald Rumsfeld’s strategy, which was hostile to any tendency that Karzai based his authority on the presence of U.S. troops, rather than developing his own legitimacy. “I was convinced Karzai needed to learn to govern the Chicago way,” Rumsfeld wrote in his memoirs.⁴⁹ He communicated to Bush that if Karzai was given the freedom to throw around the weight of American soldiers, he would be tempted to overreach rather than learn to use patronage and political incentives to govern. He was also of the opinion that to keep the pressure on the terrorists and rogue regimes, the military would be needed elsewhere.

It seemed that if the writers of the *Standard* were pressed to choose between stabilizing Afghanistan and focus more on certain countries in the Middle East, they would choose the latter. Rather than continue to press for more troops sent into Afghanistan the magazine soon shifted its focus to the Middle East, its old region of interest. There were some notable exceptions, like Frederick Kagan’s “It’s Not Over There” article in April 2002, and Elie Krakowski’s cover story in July on winning the peace in Afghanistan. Under Rumsfeld, Frederick Kagan had gained some prominence within the Defense Department. A paper he wrote on strategy and force structure was made obligatory reading by Rumsfeld in April 2001, shortly after taking over the department.⁵⁰ In it he warned sternly against the concept of ‘strategic pause’ that would enable the U.S. to modernize the army and save money by reducing current troop levels at the same time. Historically, Kagan argued, the U.S.

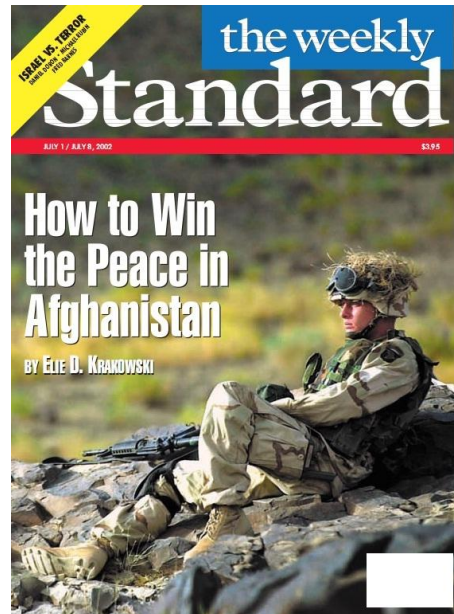
⁴⁷ Tom Donnelly, “What to Do Next.” *The Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2001, 10

⁴⁸ <http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/992/2002-09-03%20to%20Vice%20President%20Richard%20B%20Cheney%20re%20Decision-%20Memo%20Attachment.pdf> (accessed 9.28.2012)

⁴⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 407

⁵⁰ <http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/924/2001-04-16%20to%20Paul%20Wolfowitz%20et%20al%20re%20Military%20Manpower.pdf#search=%22frederick%20kagan%22> (accessed 10.09.2012)

had faced a major military commitment of troops around every twenty years. Reduced troop levels, like Britain implemented in the decades after the Crimean War, would inevitably make the US reluctant to commit troops in an emerging crisis as they always would need to keep their troops ready for an even greater threat to its core interests. Only with a real two-conflict capacity could the U.S. defend its hegemonic role freely. Writing on Afghanistan a year later Kagan once again lamented the lack of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.⁵¹ More modest than Donnelly, Kagan suggested that as the U.S. currently enjoyed respect among Afghans, twenty thousand troops, coupled with good air support, would signal that the US was committed to secure a post-Taliban order. The clear communication of such a commitment would in itself move the country in the right direction. Three months later Elie Krakowski, then a senior fellow at Johns Hopkins University, had a more alarmist tone as he predicted that the current strategy in Afghanistan would unravel all the gains achieved.⁵² Without clear U.S. control the states surrounding it would continue to fight over influence as they had done for decades. This would not only affect Afghanistan, but also send a signal that the US did not have the will to stay the course after they entered a country. Dire words, but also the last the *Weekly Standard* had to say about Afghanistan for nearly two years. For most of the writers involved in the *Standard*, Afghanistan was a symptom rather than a cause. Without the ideology, money, and terrorists imported from the Middle East, Afghanistan would at most have represented a regional challenge.



Even so their warnings about the situation in Afghanistan stood in stark contrast to the *Foreign Affairs* essays which during the summer basked in the afterglow of success. Michael O’Hanlon, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, called Rumsfeld’s strategy “a flawed masterpiece,” the failure to capture the leaders of al Qaeda and the Taliban its only weakness. The depiction of the current lack of U.S. soldiers as “a major mistake” was only mentioned as an apropos in the second last paragraph.⁵³ An essay on building a new Afghan army took the

⁵¹ Frederick Kagan, “It’s Not Over Over There.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 15, 2002, 16

⁵² Elie Krakowski, “How to Win the Peace in Afghanistan.” *The Weekly Standard*, July 1, 2002, 23

⁵³ Michael O’Hanlon, “A Flawed Masterpiece.” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2002 : <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58022/michael-ehanlon/a-flawed-masterpiece?page=show>

withdrawal of Coalition Forces from Afghanistan within the end of 2002 as a given.⁵⁴ Robert Rotberg, the director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, defended the concept of nation building as crucial to U.S. credibility and suggested a peace-keeping effort “along the lines of NATO's operations in Kosovo, or the UN battalions in Sierra Leone.”⁵⁵ Not until the November/December issue, an essay by Rachel Bronson, a Senior Fellow at the conservative Olin Foundation, tackled the Afghan security problem heads on. The opening line went “[a]s violence in Afghanistan continues to simmer, the stabilizing role of American troops there looks increasingly necessary.”⁵⁶ Her argument was that the US would, as they had done many times before, realize that they had to invest troops in order to secure order in Afghanistan. Unfortunately these troops would do a poor job as the army really had little idea how to execute such a strategy efficiently. Because of this deficiency they could not envision a clear exit strategy, which would make them reluctant through the whole endeavor. She suggested that the military institutions had never made an effort to learn these skills because they had not been pushed enough by civilian leaders.

Bronson's emphasis on strategy as a requirement for success is a seemingly contrast to Frederick Kagan's and the *Weekly Standard's* general emphasis on military muscle. It may be a result of how the *Standard* defined its role. Its stated goal had from the beginning been to form conservative opinion and reach policy makers; shaping a governing movement. This seemed to have led its focus towards the near future, advocating what the next policy goal should be. Changing a colossal institution like the military was a highly complicated and technical mission, which the magazine's writers may have been wise in only depicting with broad strokes. It may also have been that they generally disagreed with Bronson's premise. Amongst U.S. peace keeping failures Bronson lists Bosnia, a peace keeping venture supported by the *Weekly Standard*, and where U.S. military presence lasted from 1995 to 2004. In the pages of the *Standard* on the other hand, Robert Kagan wrote in a 1999 editorial that the intervention worked “much better than they predicted.”⁵⁷ While not directly writing on the U.S. presence after this, several articles notes that in the War on Terror there were no trouble at all coming from Muslims in Bosnia. Rather than becoming in Frederick Kagan's terms a

⁵⁴ Anja Manuel and P. W. Singer, “A New Model Afghan Army.” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2002 : <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58039/anja-manuel-and-p-w-singer/a-new-model-afghan-army?page=show>

⁵⁵ Robert Rotberg, “Failed States in a World of Terror.” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2002 : <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58046/robert-i-rotberg/failed-states-in-a-world-of-terror?page=show>

⁵⁶ Rachel Bronson, “When Soldiers Become Cops.” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2002 : <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58440/rachel-bronson/when-soldiers-become-cops?page=show>

⁵⁷ Robert Kagan, *The Weekly Standard*, March 1, 1999, 7

“broken window” in the international community, inviting anarchy and foreign meddling, Bosnia and the Balkans had been retired as a trouble spot.⁵⁸ At least in 2002, the opinion amongst *Standard* writers seemed to be that nation-building in a multi-ethnic country inevitably takes time, and that the U.S. military was professional enough to learn how to swim when thrown into deep waters. Apart from Bronson’s essay, *Foreign Affairs* similarly forgot about Afghanistan as the attention moved to the Middle East. The *Weekly Standard* had strong opinions about Iraq, as will be described in the next chapter, but it was also a strong defender of Bush’s War on Terror concept which they felt also covered the ideology that had created both al Qaeda and the Taliban.

When the *Weekly Standard* returned to Afghanistan in the spring of 2004 they had moved their position somewhat closer to the administration. Reuel Marc Gerecht argued that Bush and Rumsfeld should do more if they had any ambition of reforming the warlord system.⁵⁹ On the other hand he raised the question about how much money and manpower such a primitive economy could absorb without getting as bad as, for instance, South Vietnam got (around twenty thousand U.S. soldiers were in Afghanistan 2004-07⁶⁰). Also, the War in Iraq had drawn most of the foreign al Qaeda fighters away from Afghanistan, turning it into more of an internal battle. At the time there was a slow, but steady, rise in the number of attacks by anti-government elements. The great jumps came in 2005 when almost two thousand attacks were recorded, and in 2006 when the number hit five thousand.⁶¹ In the *Standard’s* narrative the rise in violence was natural in light of the Afghan Presidential election set to be in October 2004. The election was an achievement widely covered by the magazine, but it failed to stem the rise in violence. In April 2004, Tom Donnelly and Vance Serchuk, a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote a report from Afghanistan, named “Nation Building, After All,” in which they travelled with U.S. military in Afghanistan.⁶² The report is positive on behalf of Afghanistan’s future, mentioning the expanding number of Provisional Reconstruction Teams (development workers guarded by soldiers), and a continuing effort to provide money to ordinary Taliban soldiers willing to demobilize. The parliamentary elections of September 2005 gave an incentive for local strongmen to jump on board and clean their act, so they could participate, Donnelly and

⁵⁸ <http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/924/2001-04-16%20to%20Paul%20Wolfowitz%20et%20al%20re%20Military%20Manpower.pdf#search=%22frederick%20kagan%22> (accessed 10.09.2012)

⁵⁹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Not a Diversion.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 12, 2004, 23

⁶⁰ Astri Suhrke, *Eksperimentet Afghanistan* (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag AS, 2011), 61

⁶¹ Astri Suhrke, *Eksperimentet Afghanistan* (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag AS, 2011), 63

⁶² Vance Serchuk and Tom Donnelly, “Nation Building, After All.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 11, 2005, 20

Serchuk argued. Yet as the elections came closer there were none of the celebratory articles that had accompanied the Presidential election. Ellen Bork, deputy director of the think-tank Project for a New American Century, argued how the election system was designed to prevent the rise of political parties, as only individuals could run, without mentioning party affiliation or have anything but a personalized logo.⁶³ According to Bork it was obvious that the strategy of President Karzai, and his allies, was to perpetuate the social structure rather than attempt to reform it. Serchuk's comment on the election was similar, as he warned against the democratic state turning from a place where power is created, to where power is merely mirrored.⁶⁴ While critical, the articles on Afghanistan in 2004-05 seemed resigned to the current course taken by the administration. It was clear Afghanistan was seen as a sideshow by the *Standard*. While Iraq could change a whole region, Afghanistan was just too primitive, too alien, to have effects beyond the stabilization of the country itself.

A War of Ideas

“Our victory in the Cold War owed at least as much to our ideological arsenal as to our military deterrent,” Joshua Muravchick, then a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), wrote in a June 2003 issue of the *Standard*.⁶⁵ He then continued to criticize the execution of the War on Terror as having ignored the war of ideas completely. Just as the Communist ideology was essential for Soviet behavior, for the *Weekly Standard* there was an ideology behind the enemies in this new war, and that was Wahhabism. The historian Eugene Rogan describes Wahhabism as an extremely orthodox movement aiming to bring Islam back to its pristine roots.⁶⁶ It emerged in the eighteenth century and became a constant ideological threat to the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire on the Arabian Peninsula. In the beginning of the twentieth century Saudi Arabia became the first state with an explicit Wahhabist ideology.⁶⁷ As early as October 2001 David Wurmser, director of Middle East studies at AEI, noted in the *Standard* how Saudi backing of al Qaeda had originally been an attempt by a faction of the Saudi royal family to endear themselves to influential Wahhabi sheiks and clerics.⁶⁸

Stephen Schwartz became a prolific contributor on the subject of Wahhabism after 9/11. Like many neoconservatives of the previous generation Schwartz started out as an

⁶³ Ellen Bork, “They’re Voting in Afghanistan.” *The Weekly Standard*, August 1, 2005, 17

⁶⁴ Vance Serchuk, “Kabuled Together.” *The Weekly Standard*, September 19, 2005, 31

⁶⁵ Joshua Muravchick, “America Loses Its Voice.” *The Weekly Standard*, June 9, 2003, 16

⁶⁶ Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 54

⁶⁷ Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 177

⁶⁸ David Wurmser, “The Saudi Connection.” *The Weekly Standard*, October 29, 2001, 15



active leftist, but gradually moved to the Right.⁶⁹ A student of Sufi Islam since the late 1960s he converted to Islam in 1997, a rare thing for someone born a Jewish American.⁷⁰ Schwartz started his writing for the *Standard* by covering developments in the Balkans, but after 9/11 his writings mostly concerned Muslim ideology. His core argument was how there is no ‘moderate’ Wahhabism as “it is an amoral power ideology that cannot accept the coexistence of Muslim and non-Muslim civilizations.”⁷¹ He soon began questioning the rationale behind a continued U.S.-Saudi

alliance, stating that “difficult as it may be for our leaders to say it in public, it is increasingly clear that Saudi Arabian Wahhabism is part of the ‘axis of evil’—and possibly the most dangerous part.”⁷² Taking a more realist stance was Irwin Stelzer, an American economist living in Britain, often functioning as a kind of London correspondent for the *Standard*. In a long article he declared in his opening line that “the Saudi Arabian regime is no friend of ours.”⁷³ Yet any attempt to pressure the shaky despots towards reform would be a re-run of what happened to the Shah in Iran, creating a state run by hard-line Wahhabists. He further argued that America is too dependent on Saudi oil to radically disturb this alliance of mutual necessity.

For these neoconservatives, who believed in the power of ideas as equally important as the cold logic of Realism, the dilemma continued to haunt the pages of the magazine. As Jeanne Kirkpatrick wrote in her classic *Commentary* essay ‘Dictatorship and Double Standards,’ the US could tolerate authoritarian states as long as they could identify a path towards modernization.⁷⁴ The problem here was how the more *Weekly Standard* writers looked at Saudi Arabia, the more they were inclined to view it as a totalitarian state. As Vice President Cheney went on a Middle East tour in March 2002, in order to drum up Arab support for the War on Terror, Robert Kagan and William Kristol complained that he did not approach the Saudi royal family with the same tough choice he presented to Pakistan: You’re

⁶⁹ <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=19665> (accessed 10.12.2012)

⁷⁰ <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/about/> (accessed 10.12.2012)

⁷¹ Stephen Schwartz, “In Search of a Moderate Sheikh.” *The Weekly Standard*, November 12, 2001, 20

⁷² Stephen Schwartz, “Despotism in Saudi Arabia.” *The Weekly Standard*, February 18, 2002, 20

⁷³ Irwin Stelzer, “Can We Do Without Saudi Oil?” *The Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2001, 28

⁷⁴ <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/dictatorships-double-standards/>

either with us, or with the terrorists.⁷⁵ Kristol and Kagan applauded Bush's Axis of Evil speech held the previous month, when he defined Iran, Iraq and North Korea as simply evil.⁷⁶ This was the Reaganite rhetoric they had longed for ever since their 1996 *Foreign Affairs* essay, and they predicted that if this conception became the bedrock of American attitude towards rogue states, "even the nervous nannies of the establishment will end up applauding." Then just a month later the language towards the Arab dictators was back to normal.

The focus on Wahhabism continues as a focus in the analysis of the global War on Terror. Stephen Schwartz took the side of Uzbek dictator Islam Karimov as he cracked down on Muslim radicals, whom Schwartz regarded as Wahhabists operating outside Uzbekistan's native Sufi traditions.⁷⁷ Uzbekistan was seen as one of the battlegrounds where the rollback of Saudi Wahhabism was to begin. In the summer of 2002 an article by Simon Henderson, of the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy, suggested that the House of Saud had distanced itself from Washington, choosing to firm up its support among the virulently anti-American populace it had helped create.⁷⁸

Sporadic articles on the topic continued, but a new emphasis on Saudi Arabia's role in the War on Terror began again after the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the following Sunni insurgency. In the August 18 2003 issue, the *Weekly Standard* had two long essays criticizing the U.S. attitude towards Saudi Arabia. The first by Max Singer, co-founder of a conservative think tank called the Hudson Institute, argued that Saudi Arabia's 'oil weapon' was vastly overrated.⁷⁹ "Their belief in their oil weapon comes from their recognition of our fear of them," Singer continued. As dependent as they had become on oil exports, and the technological advances that made unconventional oil steadily cheaper, the Saudi position was eroding. Because of the political vulnerability of the Saudi regime, almost all investment has moved to other regions, and this is a factor that the government there cannot cope with without foreign assistance. In the same issue Stephen Schwartz argued that the Saudi government has lost control of its Wahhabist elements and continued to fuel a totalitarian globalist movement.⁸⁰ He bluntly stated that the only way to halt the grip of Wahhabism in the country was to disentangle the U.S. from the regime, although he offered no discussion about what Saudi Arabia would look like if the status quo was broken. In the short term, the U.S. should attempt to marginalize Prince Nayef, the Minister of Interior, who according to

⁷⁵ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "Cheney Trips Up." *The Weekly Standard*, April 1, 2002, 17

⁷⁶ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, *The Weekly Standard*, February 11, 2002, 7

⁷⁷ Stephen Schwartz, "Our Uzbek Friends." *The Weekly Standard*, March 18, 2002, 16

⁷⁸ Simon Henderson, "The Coming Saudi Showdown." *The Weekly Standard*, July 15, 2002, 19

⁷⁹ Max Singer, "Saudi Arabia's Overrated Oil Weapon." *The Weekly Standard*, August 18, 2003, 22

⁸⁰ Stephen Schwartz, "The Dysfunctional House of Saud." *The Weekly Standard*, August 18, 2003, 26

several *Weekly Standard* articles was the central figure most dedicated to Wahhabism. Even as the Bush administration, along with conservative newspapers like the Wall Street Journal, emphasized the modest beginning of democratic reforms within Saudi Arabia, the *Weekly Standard* kept up their strong criticism of the kingdom. The long-promised regional elections were denounced as a totally unconvincing attempt of lip-service to the U.S. agenda.⁸¹

In the biographies from actors inside the Bush administration, Saudi Arabia was not a topic for in-depth discussion. There seemed almost to be two different Saudi kingdoms described, one having funded radical madrassas and mosques in Afghanistan, paving the way for the Taliban, and one being a key ally, even described by Donald Rumsfeld as a moderate Arab state.⁸² Vice President Cheney discussed Saudi Arabia only in terms of their degree of acceptance of American foreign policy goals, or the threat against the country from Saddam's Iraq. Discussing developments in Middle Eastern countries beside U.S. adversaries, he mentioned Turkey as "to be in the middle of a dangerous transition from a key NATO ally to an Islamist-governed nation developing close ties with countries like Iran and Syria at the expense of ... United States and Israel."⁸³ Both Rumsfeld and Cheney clearly identified the War on Terror strictly in terms of security and Muslim nations' deference to U.S. policy goals. Neither memoir focused on Bush's freedom agenda at all. National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on the other hand, consistently mentioned the freedom agenda in context with her experiences. "We rather quickly arrived at the conclusion that U.S. interests and values could be linked together in a coherent way," Rice wrote in her book, "forming what I came to call a distinctly American realism."⁸⁴ Like Truman had done in Europe after WW2, using the consolidation of democracy to strengthen the U.S. balance of power, ideals and national interests were compatible in the Middle East. There was no real way of consolidating an advantageous balance of power without anchoring it in strong political societies. Here Turkey was seen as an example of how Islamic democracy would work; a "frontline state in the historic struggle to reconcile the principles of Islam and the demands of individual liberty." On Saudi Arabia little substantial was written, except that they had struck a bargain, "the mosque is yours; the public sphere is ours," with the Wahhabi clerics. In this environment utopian extremism had become the outlet for politics. While indicating that this is an untenable situation in the long run, she professed a belief that a constant soft push from Western countries could achieve reform, while avoiding instability.

⁸¹ Ali Al Ahmed, "So Much for Saudi Reform." *The Weekly Standard*, April 29, 2004, 14

⁸² Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 31

⁸³ Dick Cheney, *In My Time* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 379

⁸⁴ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 324-331

In the pages of *Foreign Affairs* the situation in Saudi Arabia was discussed as a typical product of the dysfunction in an authoritarian state. Barry Rubin, editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs, Fouad Ajami, professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Johns Hopkins University, and David Hoffman, President of Internews Network, all regarded the development of Middle Eastern religious anti-Americanism as the result of how the governments had blamed American policy in order to take the focus off their own shortcomings. According to Rubin “There is the attempt to reduce all American policy to a single issue: U.S. support for Israel,”⁸⁵



Hoffman followed a similar line and noted that “it is no coincidence that countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, where the public has little access to outside information or free and independent news media, are the very places where terrorism is bred.”⁸⁶ While the *Weekly Standard* concurred with this analysis, the focus on the Wahhabist dimension, and the implying that the U.S. had to reconsider its alliance with the Saudi kingdom, seemed unique for the *Standard*. There may be several reasons for this. Being self-professed Reaganites many of the writers in the *Standard* believed that one of the reasons for Reagan’s success was that he managed to define a clear picture of who the enemy was, in stark moral terms. Following in his footsteps, Wahhabism became the equivalent of the totalitarian expansionist ideology of Communism that détente could not contain. Writing the editorial on Bush’s second inaugural speech, Kristol opened with a Leo Strauss quote: “A social science that cannot speak of tyranny with the same confidence with which medicine speaks, for example, of cancer, cannot understand social phenomena as what they are.”⁸⁷ Portraying Wahhabism as a sort of existential threat provided a contrast to the liberal society that the *Weekly Standard* believed the War on Terror was there to defend and promote. This is consistent with what I defined as the Straussian school of foreign policy in Chapter 2. In *America Alone*, Halper and Clarke suggested how neoconservative antipathy towards Saudi Arabia had been a constant feature since the 1980s, simply because Saudi Arabia had been one of the most prominent

⁸⁵ Barry Rubin, “The Real Roots of Arab Anti-Americanism.” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 2002 : <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58434/barry-rubin/the-real-roots-of-arab-anti-americanism?page=show> (accessed 10.15.2012)

⁸⁶ David Hoffman, “Beyond Public Diplomacy.” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, 2002 : <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/57813/david-hoffman/beyond-public-diplomacy?page=show>

⁸⁷ “On Tyranny.” *The Weekly Standard*, January 31, 2005, 9

defenders of Palestinian rights versus Israel.⁸⁸ While this could be a factor, it would be a clear break with the *Standard's* line if they did not emphasize ideology, even if the state in question was a U.S. ally. In general the magazine seemed more concerned with how authoritarian governments would influence their people in the long run, than to have some explicitly anti-American/Israel Islamist party govern within a liberal framework.

By demonizing the specter of Wahhabism in the same way as had been done towards Communism during the Cold War, the *Weekly Standard* attempted to paint the picture of a broad ideological struggle, without portraying it as a war against Islam or Muslims. Looking back at Lewis Mumford's description of fascist principles as grounded in nihilistic rage, a revolt against modernity that glorified war and physical cruelty, Wahhabism is seen as a relative of that age rather than as a religious ideology.⁸⁹ The framing of enemies as 'Islamofascists' was not new, but the *Standard's* goal was to equalize this with Wahhabism. As the insurgency in Iraq threatened to permanently shatter the hope of Iraq as a democratic beacon for the Middle East, there was a tendency to regard Shiites, not only in Iraq, as belonging to a tolerant and potentially liberal traditions, while Sunnis were more susceptible to the Wahhabist rage.⁹⁰ Regarding Iran, this line of argument meant the problem was a matter of regime rather than geo-politics. Gerecht even indicated at one point that the U.S. could live with a democratic Iran armed with nuclear weapons.⁹¹

The magazine continued to emphasize the most sweeping statements from the Bush administration, which they saw were getting pushed aside in favor of day-to-day news from Iraq. Around August 2003 Condoleezza Rice emerged as the *Weekly Standard* definitive favorite within the administration. From August 2003, when she gave two speeches and published an opinion piece in the Washington Post, she became the public face of what was to become known as Bush's 'freedom agenda.'⁹² She began to consistently frame Iraq into the context of a larger project, which was to establish a long-term commitment from the U.S. to help and promote liberal reforms throughout the Middle East. The *standard* frequently contrasted the lofty rhetoric with what they felt was done to win the war of ideas they meant took place. In an article named "The Quiet Americans," Irwin Stelzer complained about the

⁸⁸ Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clark, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 168

⁸⁹ Joseph Loconte, "Barbarism Then and Now," *The Weekly Standard*, August 16, 2004, 12

⁹⁰ As examples see: Stephen Schwartz, "Fear Not the Shias," *The Weekly Standard*, March 24, 2003, 27 / Reuel Marc Gerecht, "A Difficult Marriage," *The Weekly Standard*, December 22, 2003, 25

⁹¹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, "What Hath Ju-Ju Wrought!" *The Weekly Standard*, March 14, 2005, 22

⁹² "Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses Foreign Policy (August 7, 2003) : <http://merln.ndu.edu/merln/pfiraq/archive/wh/20030807-1.pdf> / "National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice Remarks to Veterans of Foreign Wars." (August 25, 2003) : <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/08/20030825-1.html> / "Transforming the Middle East." (August 7, 2003) : http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/US/WH/us-wh-rice-wp_oped-080703.htm (all accessed 11.07.2012)

passive role taken by the Colin Powell and his State Department in internalizing and ‘selling’ the American grand strategy.⁹³ Contrasting the effort to what was done during the Cold War, he wanted the same broad hearts and mind strategy that used both political, educational, but also cultural means to promote a “combatively intellectual” program. The example he used was the British literary magazine *Encounter*, co-founded by Irving Kristol in 1953, and covertly funded by the CIA. Another article that commented the shutdown of Radio Free Europe, portrayed the best strategy as “neither an official government mouthpiece, like the *Voice of America*, nor a forum for neutral reporting.”⁹⁴ It was the essence of political and cultural freedom that should be promoted, but not necessarily American culture in itself. The same sentiments are repeated in various other articles, as a strong belief in that the ideological commitment and methods held and promoted by the first generation of neoconservatives could work just as well in the War on Terror.

The Price of War

The *Weekly Standard* in its first ten years was a magazine about ideas. The magazine had never been especially concerned about fiscal responsibility, but before 9/11 this was not a concern as the Clinton administration, together with a stingy Republican Congress, had gotten the budget running a surplus. A couple of years into the War on Terror, the situation had changed, but the writers of the *Standard* seemed not to care much if it meant sacrificing anything on their policy agenda. Of the frequent contributors only Irwin Stelzer wrote consistently how the Bush administration was “economical with the truth” regarding the cost of their policies.⁹⁵ Stelzer joined the rest of the *Standard* writers in wholly supporting the policies abroad, but he found the commitment incompatible with “the largest expansion of the welfare state since the glory days of Lyndon Johnson,” coupled with tax cuts even as the economy was booming.⁹⁶ Stelzer estimated the prescription drug program, the bulk of Bush’s welfare expansion, could cost as much as two percent of GDP; all this without ever vetoing a spending bill in his first period. Stelzer’s morale was that the War on Terror was costly, but worth it, and compared to what happened at home, not the reason for the increasing budget deficit. The magazine’s main writer on domestic policy, Fred Barnes, also noted how the increase in discretionary spending (non-mandatory) had increased from less than three percent

⁹³ Irwin Stelzer, “The Quiet Americans.” *The Weekly Standard*, January 19, 2004, 10

⁹⁴ Arch Puddington, “RFE, RIP.” *The Weekly Standard*, December 15, 2003, 16

⁹⁵ Irwin Stelzer, “A Foreign Policy Worth Paying For.” *The Weekly Standard*, August 18, 2003, 20

⁹⁶ Irwin Stelzer, “All Hat and No Cattle.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 17, 2004, 27

per year under Clinton, to eight during the Bush administration.⁹⁷ Barnes did not seem too worried, and in June 2004 he saw the contours of shrinking deficit and a program of austerity in the second period.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Fred Barnes, "Hey, Big Spenders!" *The Weekly Standard*, December 8, 2003, 9

⁹⁸ Fred Barnes, "About That Budget Deficit." *The Weekly Standard*, June 14, 2004, 12

Chapter Five

Iraq

Leading Up to the War

For years the Weekly Standard had been giving the Iraq question special attention. As Bush's presidency began, the sanctions regime was near collapse, and the administration's first course of policy was to adjust the sanctions to make them 'smarter,' which would mean they caused less harm to ordinary Iraqis.¹ In an editorial the Standard acknowledged that this was probably the only diplomatic way forward, but still defined it as a retreat.² In an article less than two months before 9/11 Reuel Marc Gerecht argued that in Middle Eastern eyes the USS Cole bombing of October 2000, and Saddam outwitting America and its allies, the anti-Americans have the upper hand which will only entice Al Qaeda to try to push the U.S. further on the defensive.³ Having established himself as someone able to outlast Western power, Saddam as a symbol was intimately linked to the rise of Islamic terrorism, according to Gerecht. This line of thought was shared by Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly in their article immediately after the attacks on the World Trade Center.⁴ For them the 9/11 attacks was the evidence that adopting a defensive posture will only increase the risk of massive attacks on U.S. interests or even America itself. Until Saddam have acquired a significant Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capability the outcome of an invasion will be certain, an easy U.S. victory. "The larger challenge will be occupying Iraq after the fighting is over," Schmitt and Donnelly predicted, "even with allied help, a constabulary mission in Iraq will make the costs of operations in the Balkans pale in comparison." Schmitt also points out in another article how one of the 9/11 hijackers, Mohamed Atta, supposedly met in Prague with Iraqi intelligence officials, yet this connection was not given much attention in articles leading up to the Iraq War.⁵



¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/11/opinion/11iht-edignatius_ed2.html (accessed 10.15.2012)

² "Clinton's Foreign Policy (cont.)," *The Weekly Standard*, March 12, 2001, 11

³ Reuel Marc Gerecht, "A Covering Superpower," *The Weekly Standard*, July 30, 2001, 26

⁴ Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly, "What Our Enemies Want..." *The Weekly Standard*, September 24, 2001, 14

⁵ Gary Schmitt, "Why Iraq?" *The Weekly Standard*, October 29, 2001, 13

For the Weekly Standard at large the analysis seemed to be the same as within the Bush administration: this was not the time to settle the Iraq issue. In January 2002 however, with the invasion of Afghanistan accomplished successfully, the Weekly Standard turned to Iraq with two long articles. The first by Robert Kagan and William Kristol repeated the claim by Gerecht that Iraq is the litmus test on whether the Pax Americana is governable when faced with adversaries. “There is no debate about the facts. No one doubts the nature of the threat Saddam poses,” Kristol and Kagan stated categorically.⁶ His intent clear for all to see, the only doubt is about capability. To take out al Qaeda and leave Saddam alone, they argue, is to treat Hitler as a diversion from the fight against Japan. Having both Turkey and Iraq firmly in the pro-western camp could create an ideological shift similar to the death of fascism after 1945. On the operational level they advocated the inclusion of Ahmad Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress, an organization of Iraqi exiles, whom they view as representatives of the whole opposition. Chalabi was a controversial figure within the administration. Having left Iraq as early as 1958, at age fourteen, he was still a skilled lobbyist for Iraqi liberation and enjoyed an especially strong network in the U.S. Congress and the Defense Department.⁷ On the other hand he was detested within the CIA after a failed operation in northern Iraq, which had hampered any program to provide weapons to opposition groups within Iraq.⁸ In another article in the same issue Stephen Peter Rosen, a professor of national security and military affairs at Harvard, writes on tyrants more generally. Because tyrants invariably live in conditions that require them to be suspicious of everyone around them, Rosen writes, he will prioritize his short-term survival over long term penalties or benefits.⁹ The threat of force then will be much more effective than sanctions, as even the risk of immediate punishment often makes a tyrant change his course. His conclusion regarding Saddam is that the United Nations approach is not built to tackle the governing nature of tyrants and will most likely fail.

At this time the planning for a possible invasion of Iraq was well under way within the administration. In the Bush administration the Weekly Standard was definitely a plugged-in magazine, as journalist Bob Woodward calls it. According to Woodward Karl Rove, one of the President’s top advisors who also ran both his campaigns, often ate lunch with Kristol.¹⁰ Kristol, David Brooks and co-editor Fred Barnes became members of a select group, between

⁶ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “What to Do About Iraq.” *The Weekly Standard*, January 21, 2002, 23

⁷ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 489

⁸ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (London: Pocket Books, 2004), 20

⁹ Stephen Peter Rosen, “How to Deal with Tyrants.” *The Weekly Standard*, January 21, 2002, 27

¹⁰ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (London: Pocket Books, 2004), 333

seven and ten, that had periodic off-the record sessions with Condoleezza Rice after she became Secretary of State.¹¹ Even if this group was not operational in her time as National Security Advisor, it at least indicated a long-held friendly attitude. Finally as described in Chapter 3, Paul Wolfowitz, Zalmay Khalilzad and especially John R. Bolton had written several articles for the Standard under the Clinton administration and were now serving in high-level position within the Bush administration. Perhaps most importantly Gerecht was part of a high level think tank established by Wolfowitz in November 2001 to create an out-of-the box report for the President to use.¹² According to Woodward the report had a strong impact on President Bush, Cheney and Rice, who found it “very, very persuasive.” The topics and tenor of the January articles then corresponded nicely to how Woodward describes the debates within the administration at the same time.¹³ At this point their attention had drifted to Iraq and both Pentagon and the State Department were jockeying for their respective angles, and with their support for Chalabi the Standard was supporting the current effort made by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz.

Of course in the area of operation outsiders were not included in any substantial way and as the wheels were turning inside the administration, selecting early 2003 as the ideal time to invade, the Weekly Standard voiced disappointment that Bush’s hard ‘Axis of Evil’ rhetoric was toned down in the months after.¹⁴ Just as the last of these disheartened editorials hit the newsstands Bush held his June 1 West Point speech, laying out the concept of preemption and its role in the War on Terror, and by the end July everyone knew for certain that the pressure was on Iraq. While also writing about WMDs and aluminum tubes for plutonium enrichment, which was what the debate around Iraq centered on in general, the Weekly Standard’s special interest was in talking up the geopolitical benefits of removing Saddam. Gerecht wrote in August about Iran in the context of a post-Saddam Federalist Iraq with the Shiites as the dominant group.¹⁵ The Iranian mullahs are even now on the defensive, Gerecht argues, attempting to handle a young majority cohort that is “restless, angry, poor, sexually frustrated, and addicted to the dream ... of a better life.” As their nuclear program is the only popular card the Mullahs have left up their sleeves, the mere presence of a free Shiite state next to it would put enormous strain on the regime. In October the same author talks down the regional risks involved in invading Iraq. His argument was that “self-interest and

¹¹ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 537

¹² Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 84

¹³ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (London: Pocket Books, 2004), Chapter 7-8

¹⁴ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “Back on Track?” *The Weekly Standard*, April 29, 2002, 9 / Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “Going Wobbly?” *The Weekly Standard*, June 3, 2002, 11

¹⁵ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Regime Change in Iraq?” *The Weekly Standard*, August 5, 2002, 30



fear of American power, not feelings of fraternity and common purpose, are what will glue together any lasting international effort against terrorism.”¹⁶ In other words diplomacy was seen by Gerecht as largely wasted on the Arab regimes that were really concerned with their balancing act between populism and reliance on Western support. Accompanying his article is a similar long article by professor of military history at the United States Naval Academy Victor Davis Hanson, on the brittleness of America’s Arab allies.¹⁷ Because both the ‘moderate’ authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and the authoritarian regimes hostile to America are foremost concerned about keeping their own power, Hanson believed their similarly dismal results in improving living standards for their citizens will make them ever more reliant on extremist propaganda against Israel and America. In his analysis, deposing of Saddam Hussein and establishing a legitimate democracy would be playing the long game, regardless of the reactions amongst U.S. Arab allies.

This bundle of arguments was then repeated in the Standard by Max Boot and various editorials. It is interesting to note the break with the criticism the neoconservative criticism raised by Jeanne Kirkpatrick and other Reaganites in the late 1970s and onwards. Then the argument against excessive idealism in regard to authoritarian allies, was that the main task was to save a society from totalitarianism and not interfere with the slow modernization inside the authoritarian states.¹⁸ Twenty years later thinkers of the neoconservative persuasion did not see any signs of modernization within authoritarian governments. Condoleezza Rice wrote as early as January 2000 in *Foreign Affairs* how “as history marches toward markets and democracy, some states have been left by the side of the road. Iraq is the prototype.”¹⁹ It may well be that as so many regions of the world experienced rapid economic growth the view of which factors that defined modernization had become narrower, and the patience with a slow-moving authoritarian state far less. Even the journalist and author Fareed Zakaria, who in his

¹⁶ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “A Necessary War.” *The Weekly Standard*, October 21, 2002, 19

¹⁷ Victor Davis Hanson, “Democracy in the Middle East.” *The Weekly Standard*, October 21, 2002, 23

¹⁸ Michael Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 180-182

¹⁹ Condoleezza Rice, “Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest.” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/55630/condoleezza-rice/campaign-2000-promoting-the-national-interest?page=show> (accessed on 10.21.2012)

2003 book *The Future of Freedom* announced his sympathy for ‘liberal autocrats,’ supported war on Iraq, arguing “the [Middle East] is so dysfunctional any stirring of the pot is good,” and that the previous policy towards Iraq had given al Qaeda its two greatest arguments: American soldiers in the Land of the Two Holy Places (Saudi Arabia), and the starvation of Iraqi children.²⁰ These sentiments about the urgent need of substantial modernization in the Middle East were echoed by conservatives like Fouad Ajami and others in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* without meeting much criticism. The overall strategy and priorities in the War on Terror was fiercely debated, but this author has found little debate around the broader goals of replacing Saddam’s regime until after the invasion had taken place.

In 2006 Francis Fukuyama, a well-known social scientist who was widely seen as a neoconservative during the 1990s, wrote a book distancing himself from the blindly pro-Iraq neoconservatives. In it he attributes the repudiation of Kirkpatrick’s caution to the constant campaigning for ‘hard Wilsonianism’ made by Kristol and Kagan in the pages of the *Weekly Standard* and elsewhere.²¹ The *Weekly Standard* had refined its arguments on the ideological aspects of regime change in Iraq for years, and as 9/11 had made the Bush administration reconsider the course of U.S. foreign policy in light of root-causes for terrorism, there was an unprecedented opening for the arguments raised by *Standard* writers. As mentioned in chapter four Donald Rumsfeld had been emphasizing the need for regime change in Iraq ever since 9/11. What the *Weekly Standard* could do was to try influencing the doubters with a weak spot for idealism, notably Bush and Rice, and in the crucial phase where decisions were made they had a prominent place in the Republican foreign policy debate. By the time Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor for George H. W. Bush, wrote his much talked about ‘Don’t Attack Saddam’ article in the *Wall Street Journal* in August 2002 he was at least six months late. His arguments that targeting Saddam now was a diversion from the War on Terror, reducing the amount of cooperation from Arab countries, and that it would cause an outrage among ordinary Muslims who were rather waiting intently for a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, were all well-known issues for readers of the *Weekly Standard*, and when Scowcroft treated his arguments as seemingly beyond debate, it made his opinion too superficial to influence the debate as it stood at the time.²²

²⁰ Interview with Fareed Zakaria May 5, 2003: http://nymag.com/nymetro/news/politics/national/features/n_8621/ (accessed 10.21.2012) / Gary Rosen ed., *The Right War?: The Conservative Debate on Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 87

²¹ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 40

²² Brent Scowcroft, “Don’t Attack Saddam.” : http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2002/08/15_scowcroft_dont-attack.htm (accessed 10.21.2012)

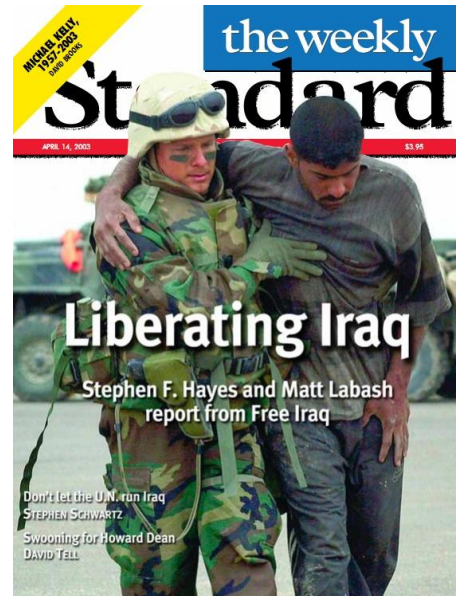
As the Bush administration attempted to build legitimacy through the United Nations and a new round of weapons inspections, the *Weekly Standard* rather calmly expect the process to culminate with the Coalition of the Willing going it alone. A November editorial typically named “The U.N. Trap?” acknowledged the need to build legitimacy but also voiced a concern that Saddam would be able to do just as much as needed to get off the hook in regards to inspections.²³ They argued that because Saddam had proved his intent, the proof of confirmed capability – a smoking gun – should not be a decisive factor. As war became certain the course, now more or less set in stone, aroused more criticism than it had done previously. In a cover essay Tod Lindberg, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and editor of *Policy Review*, attempted to meet some of the new criticism by breaking down the presumed barrier between deterrence (preventing Iraq and others from a certain behavior in fear of reactions from the U.S. and others) and preemption (using force in order to eliminate a risk before the other has a chance to strike). His argument was that Iraq after the Gulf War had agreed to not possess or attempt to gain WMDs.²⁴ The use of preemption against Iraq then “is the violent reestablishment of the terms of deterrence,” which according to Lindberg then strengthens deterrence policies elsewhere and the respect for international law and agreements, rather than weakened them as those critical to a preemptive war had suggested. His second line of argument concerned an article written by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, the two leading scholars of the Realist school. In early 2003 they belatedly attacked the idea that Saddam Hussein was not a rational leader and thus could not be deterred like others.²⁵ According to these two both Saddam’s wars had been motivated by defensive needs in both circumstances. The first against Iran had been an attempt to end an aggressive campaign by Iran to fire up a Shiite revolution in Iraq; the second to stop Kuwait from breaking the OPEC quotas which hurt the nearly bankrupt Iraqi state. His behavior before, and during those conflicts, showed no sign that he could not be deterred, even with a nuclear arsenal. Lindberg’s answer is that deterrence worked because of the bourgeois nature of the countries, the Soviet Union and Communist China, being deterred. In the case of Saddam there is the context “of one who has proved willing to assume the considerable risks of tyranny.” Making Iraq, and in time the Middle East, bourgeois (concerned about materialist things and other ‘petty’ middle-class concerns) would eliminate the need to gamble on Saddam’s rationality.

²³ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “The U.N. Trap?” *The Weekly Standard*, November 18, 2002, 9

²⁴ Tod Lindberg, “Deterrence and Prevention.” *The Weekly Standard*, February 3, 2002, 24

²⁵ John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “An Unnecessary War.” *Foreign Policy*, January 1, 2003: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2003/01/01/an_unnecessary_war?page=0,0 (accessed 10.22.2012)

So was there no doubt about the venture in Iraq in the pages of the Weekly Standard before the war? Not much. The doubt there was concerned capability in terms of staying power. Both Frederick Kagan and Tom Donnelly raised concern about the size of the army. Donnelly noted that the War on Terror was more intensive on soldiers than the Cold War had been as U.S. troops were probably not taking their families to Iraq and Afghanistan as they had done in Germany, South Korea and elsewhere.²⁶ This, Donnelly continued, would make the permanent cycle of rotation that would undoubtedly come in the extended post-combat stabilization, especially grueling for the troops. In conclusion the Weekly Standard was unequivocally for invasion in Iraq. What can be concluded about their rhetoric? Returning to Stephen Walt, he operates with three ways a war of choice can be ‘sold’ to the public: threat-inflation (treat modest challenges as near-existential threats), task-deflation (understate the length and cost of an operation) and outright concealment of important facts.²⁷



It is true that the Standard portrayed Saddam as an essential part of the ‘axis of evil’ supporting anti-terror networks, and one of the most resourceful, influential and unpredictable of those. Even so it was the threat against American hegemony in the Middle East that got most of the attention, not the aspect of WMD proliferation to terrorists. When it comes to task-deflation, which many neoconservatives have been accused of in relations to the Iraq War, the Weekly Standard has never attempted any arguments along the line of ‘the war will pay for itself.’ Quite contrary the magazine has consistently warned that both wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would be more costly than the U.S. anticipated. If the magazine is to be blamed, it would be the way it pushed for war even while acknowledging that the army was not adequately prepared for the task. Where the Weekly Standard stands out is in an area not covered by Walt, which is the possible inflation of strategic benefits. Because the magazine’s intended audience were policy makers and close observers of discussions within the Republican Party, its arguments often appealed to visionary statesmanship, pointing out the way forward, rather than selling it as an isolated mission.

²⁶ Tom Donnelly, “Still Hollow After All These Years.” *The Weekly Standard*, December 9, 2002, 14

²⁷ http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/11/a_strategic_conundrum (accessed 10.22.2012)

The End of the Beginning

On March 20th 2003 the United States and Britain invaded Iraq with the clear intention of regime change. As in Afghanistan the U.S. military surprised the world with their swift progress and low number of casualties. William Kristol did not hide his satisfaction as he looked back upon the “Saddam Must Go” issue of December 1997, noting that the Weekly Standard’s strategy for Iraq had now become the policy of the U.S. government.²⁸ The magazine also no longer felt any need to stifle the criticism of Colin Powell as Secretary of State. The invasion had, in their eyes, vindicated Rumsfeld’s new ideas for warfare and made the Powell-doctrine obsolete once and for all.²⁹ That Turkey denied U.S. troops to stage a northern invasion from their territory is blamed on the lack of diplomatic effort from Powell. An initial warning was raised by Tod Lindberg who asked the question “at heart, how liberal, how modern, how bourgeois are the Iraqi people?”³⁰ The universalism that Bush describes is an end state, Lindberg argued, and there is no way to really know at the moment how much of Saddam’s utopian, religiously tinged, Arab nationalism that are shared by the Iraqi people at large. By having replaced a Middle Eastern regime by force the U.S began to solve a problem it did not yet know the size of, and which was impossible to know beforehand. As Francis Fukuyama argued (three years later) about the basis of his disagreement with Bush’s policy, it was a shared goal that the Middle East should become bourgeois like the West, but where Fukuyama took a ‘passive Marxist’ position, noting that this would be the end destination, Bush and the Weekly Standard took a ‘Leninist’ approach where it could happen much sooner, if at all, through effort and the use of force.³¹ In response to Fukuyama’s book Kristol did not approve of the term ‘Leninist,’ and rejected the notion that history somehow moves in the right direction, without anyone governing.³² Back in 2003 the Weekly Standard blog, with even more certainty than the predictions in the magazine itself, declared on the eve of the Iraq War how “if it works, if Iraq becomes a beacon of democracy, it will spell the eventual end of the Arabian monarchies. If it doesn’t, Francis Fukuyama will need to rethink his theory about the end of history and the West will need to reassess nearly all of its assumptions about the nature of man and liberty.”³³ In any case the idealistic policy the Weekly Standard had wanted since its beginning had become a reality, and the objective of the magazine’s covering of the

²⁸ “The Imminent War.” *The Weekly Standard*, March 17, 2003, 9

²⁹ “Bum Advice.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 14, 2003, 7

³⁰ Tod Lindberg, “Why Iraq Is a Hard Place.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 14, 2003, 12

³¹ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 54

³² William Kristol, “The Long War.” *The Weekly Standard*, March 26, 2006

³³ Jonathan Last, “Prologue: The War Begins.” : <http://weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/002/387zyejo.asp> (accessed 10.25.2012)

Middle East would have to change with it. The editorial after the fall of Baghdad underlined the need for effort as Fred Barnes argued it would “take at least a year, maybe two or more, to restore order, foster a viable economy, and establish democratic institutions with roots deep enough to survive.”³⁴

For the first time in the history of the magazine the Standard sent a reporter to Kuwait to cover the invasion. Journalist Matt Labash was to spend a couple of weeks there to meet the newly liberated Iraqis. Labash’s first ventures inside Iraq, along with the more well-known journalist Christopher Hitchens, did not portray an especially warm welcome for the liberators.³⁵ Not an embedded journalist on his way to Baghdad, Labash described the border-city Umm Qasr as it became rife with corruption, lack of essentials and violence. Ironically the Weekly Standard reporter was to give a bleak introduction to ‘free Iraq’ compared to the mainstream media with their embedded reporters caught up in the shock and awe of the U.S. military.

Labash aside the commentators back in America had high hopes for the effects of liberating Iraq. “Audacity works,” concluded Tom Donnelly who saw al Qaeda’s much used rhetoric of America as a ‘weak horse’ punctured and the Vietnam now proven to be an anomaly with conditions unlikely to repeat itself.³⁶ He also noted that Iraq would be an excellent place for U.S. military bases in the Middle East.³⁷ Max Boot drew lines back to the Spanish-American War and the Korean War: “conflicts that led the United States to expand its power and to ‘operationalize’ what until then had been mere theories of foreign policy.”³⁸ The neo-Wilsonian goal Boot sees in Bush strategy is the active effort to create conditions in which societies can choose the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty. So rather than ask who is next, as Boot implied a lot of hawks did at the time, the goal now had to be to move beyond the military conquest and root a liberal state firmly in Iraqi ground, with the long-term commitment of around 60-75 thousand soldiers. Only then would the U.S. have achieved what they never did in the first Gulf War, a lasting change. Gerecht argued that under Bush the restoration of American awe now was indistinguishably linked to the expansion of liberal values.³⁹ Gerecht advocated that with Iraq as a pivot, the U.S. could now help to change the direction of a region even its own inhabitants recognize as dysfunctional.

³⁴ “The Tempting of the President.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 21, 2003, 11

³⁵ Matt Labash, “The Boys on the Bus to Iraq.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 14, 2003, 26 / “Down and Out in Umm Qasr.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 21, 2003, 21

³⁶ Tom Donnelly, “Lessons of a Three-Week War.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 28, 2003, 14

³⁷ Tom Donnelly, “There’s No Place Like Iraq.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 5, 2003, 10

³⁸ Max Boot, “What Next?” *The Weekly Standard*, May 5, 2003, 27

³⁹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “The Restoration of American Awe.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 12, 2003, 21



For Gerecht a main reason the demise of Saddam was urgent was the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which could only be controlled if most of the states in the Middle East region were to become liberal.

In the first month or so after the liberation of Iraq the scope of which changes would follow was breathtaking. A criticism against their vision is that it wished to build on the new strategic situation while conveniently ignoring the operational difficulties that prevented these two earlier expansions from becoming all they could be. In the first the U.S. got caught up in a long costly guerrilla war in the Philippines, and in the second it took on an enormous economical burden that eight year after the Korean War created a discussion inside the Kennedy administration if South Korea was worth keeping, not to mention the Vietnam War that followed.⁴⁰ Secondly the first expansion of power had been marred by racial prejudices and the second severely constrained by the need for security and stability that was paramount during the Cold War. The changes these neoconservatives themselves had experienced with democratization within the American sphere, like the Philippines, South Korea and Panama, pointed in another direction entirely. Rather than seeing these results as the end of a long and difficult process, they were seen as drawn there by the pivot of American strategic ascendancy under Reagan coupled with his perceived return to a moralist foreign policy. They were not wrong, in that lasting liberal regimes in these countries had not taken root before the Reagan administration. For states within the American order change was possible.

“The end of the beginning of the War on Terror,” William Kristol called the successful battle of Iraq.⁴¹ In the War on Terror the Middle East was the heart of the problem, according to Kristol. To him the regime in North Korea could be contained because it was not linked to an anti-liberal ideology that had appeal outside the border of that nation. With a military victory in Iraq he hoped that the next battle against Iran could be won without the use of military force, but through the force of ideas. Unfortunately events in Iraq would soon move the situation squarely into the realm of the practical.

⁴⁰ <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d226> (accessed 10.23.2012)

⁴¹ “The End of the Beginning.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 12, 2003, 9

The Long Hard Slog

Even in the ‘victory issue’ there were some signs that the supporters of the war were going on the defensive. The embedded journalist Jonathan Foreman, ‘borrowed’ from similarly Murdoch-owned New York Post, wrote an article under the headline “Bad Reporting in Baghdad: You have no idea how well things are going.”⁴² For some weeks the news was one of satisfaction: Paul Bremer was appointed civilian administrator of Iraq, he quickly hurried a de-Baathification policy, and the administration sent new soldiers to replace those rotating out of Iraq. A month later Stephen Schwartz acknowledged the continuing attacks on U.S. troops in Fallujah and other places, and warned that it was not only disgruntled Baathists, but also Wahhabists coming in from other countries, especially Saudi Arabia.⁴³ The next month an article’s headline read “What’s Gone Right: Not all the news from Iraq is bad.”⁴⁴ It seemed something was unraveling between the lines in the few Weekly Standard articles about Iraq during the first post-invasion summer.

Inside the administration the problem was that it was executing two different strategies simultaneously. As Rumsfeld wrote in his memoirs, “When it came to the administration’s goal in Iraq, my views were straightforward. They were to help the Iraqis put in place a government that did not threaten Iraq’s neighbors, did not support terrorism, was respectful to the diverse elements of Iraqi society, and did not proliferate [WMDs]. Period. ... Any U.S. troops would focus on capturing and killing terrorists and leftover supporters of the old regime still fighting.”⁴⁵ There was no explicit role for democracy or state-building in Rumsfeld’s strategy. Bush on the other hand writes in his memoirs how he and Bremer shared the “conviction that the Iraqis were capable of democracy. [Bremer] knew it would take time ... and thought we needed more troops in Iraq. I raised the question with Don Rumsfeld and the military leadership. They assured me we had enough.”⁴⁶

Why did the Weekly Standard almost ignore the unraveling the first few months? After all they had been vocal critics during the invasion of Afghanistan. One reason was the impression that Rumsfeld shared the conviction of implementing a democracy and had proven it by pushing for the rapid de-Baathification program, led by Standard-favorite Ahmed Chalabi, that made the U.S. invested in building a new working government (in his memoirs

⁴² Jonathan Foreman, “Bad Reporting in Baghdad.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 12, 2003, 12

⁴³ Stephen Schwartz, “Saudi Mischief in Fallujah.” *The Weekly Standard*, June 23, 2003, 15

⁴⁴ Josh Chafetz, “What’s Gone Right.” *The Weekly Standard*, July 7, 2003, 19

⁴⁵ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 482

⁴⁶ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (London: Virgin Books, 2010), 258

Rumsfeld portrayed himself as a passive supporter).⁴⁷ Secondly it seemed the Standard was too invested to begin criticize the administration at such an early stage. As Kristol saw it Bush had made Weekly Standard's policy for Iraq his own, and the instinct in this time of trouble was to circle the wagons and let Bush's strategy unfold.

In July Tom Donnelly and Reuel Marc Gerecht were both sent to Baghdad. For the first time since the invasion of Iraq the Weekly Standard raised criticism against some choices made by the Bush administration. Donnelly admitted, despite earlier Standard support, that the rapid de-Baathification had been highly disruptive in such a state-centered economy as Iraq's.⁴⁸ On the larger campaign he concluded that Operation Iraqi Freedom, run as a 'just-in-time-campaign', had caused severe decision lags once the initial objectives had been achieved and the stabilization task began. Gerecht made the argument that what happened in the Sunni triangle, including Fallujah, was of minor importance compared to the main mission of keeping the Shiites on the side of the U.S.⁴⁹ In these regions, as well as the Kurdish areas and Baghdad, progress was made and the U.S. should not jeopardize the unity by involving the international community too soon, an analysis that was repeated when Max Boot visited Baghdad two months later.⁵⁰ In September, for the first time in an editorial, Kagan and Kristol voiced their frustration, predicting a disaster over time if not corrected.⁵¹ Their call was for more troops, more money (the editorial's estimate of funds needed were sixty billion dollars), more civilians from the State Department and elsewhere. The split between the view of the Weekly Standard and the Secretary of Defense was now obvious, even if nobody acknowledged it. According to Bob Woodward, Bremer discovered that Rumsfeld was so intent on avoiding a deepening in the tasks of the military that he neglected to inform the National Security Council (NSC) about Bremer's constant stream of reports.⁵² By August Condoleezza Rice had decided to become Bremer's direct link to the White House, as she discovered that the relationship between Rumsfeld and Bremer had degenerated into "one of benign neglect by Don," but she failed in creating any real discussion between the factions in the NSC that could get the various policymakers down from their barricades.⁵³ Although the selection of Bremer was initially eagerly supported by Rumsfeld, he had now moved into

⁴⁷ Richard Carlson, "Throwing Out the Baath Water." / Stephen Hayes, "New Sheriff in Town." *The Weekly Standard*, May 12, 2003, 8 / 12 / Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 514

⁴⁸ Tom Donnelly, "Why Iraq is Still a Hard Place." *The Weekly Standard*, July 21, 2003, 22

⁴⁹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, "The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship." *The Weekly Standard*, July 21, 2003, 25 / "Help Not Wanted." *The Weekly Standard*, August 18, 2003, 11

⁵⁰ Max Boot, "Reconstructing Iraq." *The Weekly Standard*, September 15, 2003, 25

⁵¹ "Do What It Takes in Iraq." *The Weekly Standard*, September 1, 2003, 7

⁵² Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 235

⁵³ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 244 / Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 240-253

what seemed to be a Rice-faction in opposition to the Rumsfeld-faction who strongly saw an American-centric system in Iraq bound to fail, and the solution for the insurgency to lay in better intelligence, not more troops. This meant handing over serious political authority to some Iraqi equivalent of Charles De Gaulle, giving the U.S. a freedom of action and the possibility of quick withdrawal rather than getting swamped by trying to fix every nut and bolt of the emerging Iraqi state.⁵⁴

Statements made by Rumsfeld in a visit to Iraq in the beginning of September 2003 were reported in the *New York Times* as “a shift and appeared to reflect the growing realization here and in Washington that the money and manpower so far committed to the American project in Iraq are proving insufficient.”⁵⁵ The *Weekly Standard* on the other hand seemed to have been informed of the policy disagreement within the administration, and what followed were a number of articles highly critical of Rumsfeld. Kristol and Kagan strongly defended an American-centric system of governing Iraq, rejecting the notion that responsibility could be unloaded onto the U.N. and other nations.⁵⁶ They also questioned the brisk pace of ‘Iraqification’, the training of an Iraqi army to replace U.S. troops, which the Department of Defense suggested in lieu of more American soldiers, arguing that at that moment this gave no other choice than to recruit from the earlier Baath regime. In the same issue Tom Donnelly suggests that Rumsfeld’s “idée fixe” on military modernization as an article of faith risked making Iraq into a disaster.⁵⁷ He labeled a reliance on getting in more international troops as extremely risky as it initially was insurgents targeting Pakistani U.N. soldiers that led to the escalation in Somalia in 1993. Frederick Kagan described Rumsfeld as having “developed plans that rely on magic to cover over the reality that our armed forces are too small ... Soldiers can be made to appear at relatively low cost. Intelligence technology will eliminate surprise, allowing us to act on the narrowest possible margin.”⁵⁸ Even Paul Wolfowitz got ridiculed for stating that “if you triple the number of coalition forces ... you’ll probably triple the attacks on the troops,” seemingly suggesting that if soldiers were not present there would not be any attacks.⁵⁹ The argument consistently made by the *Standard* was how the only way to permanently create a momentum towards increased security, be it in a neighborhood, a town, or a region, was to have enough troops there to keep the order until

⁵⁴ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 484

⁵⁵ Douglas Jehl and Dexter Filkins, “The Struggle For Iraq: Troop Levels; Rumsfeld Eager For More Iraqis To Keep Peace.” *The New York Times*, September 5, 2003 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/05/world/the-struggle-for-iraq-troop-levels-rumsfeld-eager-for-more-iraqis-to-keep-peace.html>) (Accessed 10.25.2012)

⁵⁶ “America’s Responsibility.” *The Weekly Standard*, September 15, 2003, 9

⁵⁷ Tom Donnelly, “Secretary of Stubbornness.” *The Weekly Standard*, September 15, 2003, 16

⁵⁸ Frederick Kagan, “Now You See It, Now You Don’t.” *The Weekly Standard*, September 22, 2003, 16

⁵⁹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Premature Iraqification.” *The Weekly Standard*, September 22, 2003, 26

there was a stability to build upon. Moderates would be unlikely to step up until ex-Baathists and Wahhabist terrorists were arrested or moved away, Gerecht argued. Frederick Kagan theorized that to defeat an insurgency the four goals of guarding cities, sealing borders, protecting supply lines, and attacking terrorists had to be accomplished simultaneously, the three first tasks especially manpower-intensive.⁶⁰

The next months were a precarious time for the Standard. At the same time it sought to criticize certain aspects of Bush's policies, it also had to bolster morale about the Iraq project inside the Republican Party. As Bush faced opposition within his own party on the eighty-seven billion dollar reconstruction bill, which many Republicans wanted as a partial loan to Iraq rather than as a full grant, the Weekly Standard sought to establish a rationale for the long-term support of U.S. involvement. "Yes some of us did romanticize the Iraqis beforehand," David Gelernter, a contributing editor to the Standard admitted, "no we have not found WMDs."⁶¹ Yet, he quickly added, the moral significance of ousting one of the worst tyrants in the world today swamped other arguments. In his opinion the administration should never have relied on security as the only main argument for ousting Saddam, and especially in this phase they should turn the rhetoric into a moral argument against the critics: "Peace is good, but if you have to buy it by turning your backs on suffering—at least don't be proud of the fact. We're proud that we didn't." What once was a solid front regarding the issue of Iraq was now clearly divided into the two different outlooks that Kissinger described as the pillars of American foreign policy thinking: the Rooseveltian and the Wilsonian. A policy maker like Vice President Cheney paid only lip service to the moral arguments that were large part of the fundament for Bush's freedom agenda. "We could not ignore the threat ... the security of the nation and of our friends and allies required that we act," Cheney unapologetically stated in his memoirs as his rationale for invading Iraq.⁶² Virtually all writing in the Weekly Standard leaned towards Wilsonian idealism. While both sides saw American hegemony in the Middle East as essential they were in fact divided on the reasons



⁶⁰ Frederick Kagan, "A Few Good Men." *The Weekly Standard*, May 3, 2004, 18

⁶¹ David Gelernter, "Bush's Rhetoric Deficit." *The Weekly Standard*, October 6, 2003, 23

⁶² Dick Cheney, *In My Time* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 369

and goal of this hegemony, which the Weekly Standard always saw as an opportunity to spread liberalism throughout the Middle East.

The other main aspect of the Weekly Standard's argument that fall was on the connection between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and al Qaeda. In a long article by Stephen Hayes, he argued that the link was certain, based on a memo from the Defense Department to the Senate Intelligence Committee, that was leaked to the Standard.⁶³ According to this memo relations between Iraq and al Qaeda began shortly before the first Gulf War and continued to involve training, logistical support, training camps and safe havens. A supposed al Qaeda operational meeting in Kuala Lumpur, supposedly facilitated by the Iraqi embassy in January 2000 is given special attention, as well as the more widely known rumor of a meeting in Prague between Mohammed Atta and a member of Iraqi intelligence. This 'scoop' was, to Kristol's frustration, not picked up by the mainstream press, but the topics of the article were revisited by Hayes and others in the Standard repeatedly.⁶⁴ Both the Prague link earlier and the new Kuala Lumpur link ended up in other media as small stories debating whether these Iraqis were the ones high up in the Iraqi intelligence network or simply people sharing the same name. For the Weekly Standard on the other hand these links were the basis of a campaign to solidly link Saddam's regime with the broader War on Terror, a conviction they shared with Cheney but not mentioned in other memoirs by the key actors.⁶⁵ In any case the leaked document was probably intended by people inside the administration or Congress to help solidify opinion within the Republican discourse on Iraq.

As the chronic instability in Iraq dragged on, the main frustration for the writers of the Standard was that the Bush administration seemed unable to grasp Iraq's potential and imperativeness for creating a larger transformation of the Middle East. "The front page of the November 7 Washington Post says it all," Kristol and Kagan lamented in an editorial, "Bush Urges Commitment to Transform Mideast." Below, in slightly smaller type: 'Pentagon to Shrink Iraq Force.' And below that: 'Iraqi Security Crews Getting Less Training.'"⁶⁶ For these two a loss of Iraq as a stable democracy would be a strategic calamity worse than the retreat from Vietnam, and key policymakers within the administration seemed unable to grasp it. In February 2004 the two summed up their thinking concerning Iraq in a long article named "the Right War for the Right Reasons."⁶⁷ Here they attempted to tie together the moral and

⁶³ Stephen Hayes, "Case Closed." *The Weekly Standard*, November 24, 2003, 20

⁶⁴ "About That Memo..." *The Weekly Standard*, December 8, 2003, 7

⁶⁵ Dick Cheney, *In My Time* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 414

⁶⁶ "Exit Strategy or Victory Strategy?" *The Weekly Standard*, November 17, 2003, 9

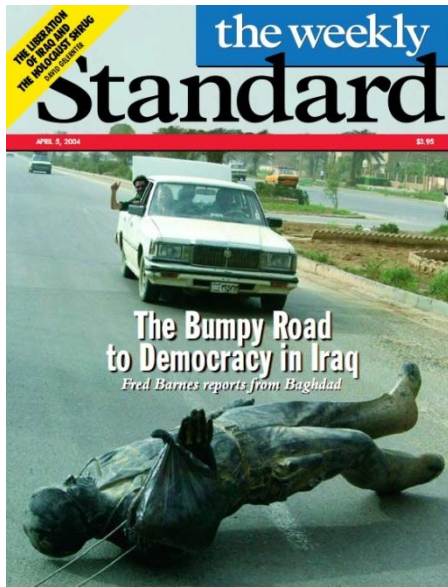
⁶⁷ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "The Right War for the Right Reasons." *The Weekly Standard*, February 23, 2004, 20

strategic aspects of the Iraq War itself, as well as the broader context of the whole Middle East. In their analysis the moral argument for ending Saddam's hold over Iraq was an integral part of the strategic calculation. The dictator was not a madman, but a predator, and his reliance on brute force at home was also the bedrock of how he viewed the region, Kagan and Kristol argued. For them, as long as Saddam ruled Iraq a dynamic of perpetual conflict in the Middle East would be endemic, and he would continue to serve as an inspiration for those who equated violence with power. Also, with the sanction regime on the verge of collapse the job of securing U.S. allies in the region would be steadily more difficult as Iraq once again accumulated military and WMD capability. On the issue of WMDs they mentioned how 'reference strains' had been found, making it easy to restart a WMD program. With the fall of Iraq, they argue, other Arab countries face a new situation where for the first time in years rising military expenditure is not an obvious choice. Rogue states like Gaddafi's Libya have reconsidered their WMD programs and come to the conclusion that it is no longer worth the risk. In conclusion they meant that the fall of Saddam should be seen as a possible beginning of a new period of change in the whole Middle East, and that the U.S. should actively contribute to this.

Robert Kagan and William Kristol were not the only ones among conservative foreign policy pundits that attempted to summarize their perspectives on Iraq in this period. As the one year anniversary of the Iraq War came around, a larger debate about the past and future of the American involvement in Iraq took place. As a Realist that also supported the Iraq War, Henry Kissinger's argument was initially more cynical than the Weekly Standard's line of thinking: to halt the changes in the psychology of the Middle East created by 9/11, the U.S. needed to impose a different image, of tanks rolling through the streets of Baghdad, the bastion of opposition to America.⁶⁸ In his view then, as well as in 2004, establishing democracy was more important for the U.S. than for the Iraqis; the important thing was to prevent a vacuum of power that then would become a base for "nihilistic elements."⁶⁹ For Kissinger success was the only exit strategy, but the U.S. has to balance between creating liberal reform and the danger of these generating unintended consequences. These unintended consequences come from the interplay between Western democracy and the indigenous culture. This argument is stressed more outright by columnist George Will who blamed neoconservative nation-builder of ignoring Moynihan's creed that "the central conservative

⁶⁸ http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/uk_kissinger_transcript.pdf / http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/IF02Ak04.html (accessed 10.29.2012)

⁶⁹ Henry Kissinger, "Intervention With A Vision." *Washington Post*, April 11, 2004



truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society.” (the quote also appears in Rumsfeld’s book)⁷⁰ In foreign policy the neoconservatives behaved like ardent Liberals in their belief that politics could rapidly change deep-set traditions. The editors of the conservative magazine National Review joined in by claiming that this war of national interest had been stolen by Wilsonians, who had overestimated the sophistication of what was still a tribal society.⁷¹

Even Fouad Ajami, an earlier proponent of wide modernization of the Middle East, beginning with Iraq, now felt the “dream is dead,” and America had returned to its accommodation with the established order of power in the Arab world.⁷² As bad news turned worse, many Conservative thinkers blamed neoconservative idealism for the mess in Iraq. The solution these Conservative critics hinted at, without stating it so explicitly, was to bring in a more authoritarian strongman that could get the situation under control. In other words the Rumsfeld line of thought had considerable support within the Conservative discourse on Iraq.

Even in this situation the Weekly Standard remarkably refused to give up its fundamental optimism on behalf of Iraq. For Reuel Marc Gerecht the Shiite was still the possible vanguard of Arab democratization. At least since the Ottoman Empire the Shiite Arabs have been short-changed by Sunnis. At that moment in 2004, Gerecht argued, the most important Iraqi Shiites like Grand Ayatollah Sistani supported anchoring Iraq in a solid liberal framework, but their fear of being short-changed once again meant a lack of continuous progress toward democracy created a backlash against U.S. presence, as well as a simmering hope among Sunnis that the new order could somehow be averted.⁷³ At the same time Gerecht noticed a notion among Americans, both in Washington and in Baghdad, that democracy in the Middle East was somehow dependent on respecting and trusting the U.S.⁷⁴ This circle of mutual distrust led the two parties to wrongly interpret the other’s ultimate intentions.

⁷⁰ George Will, “Time for Bush to See the Realities of Iraq.” in Gary Rosen (ed.) *The Right War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67-69 / Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 498

⁷¹ “An End to Illusion.” *National Review*, May 3, 2004 : <http://old.nationalreview.com/issue/editors200404160830.asp> (accessed 10.30.2012)

⁷² Fouad Ajami, “Iraq May Survive, but the Dream Is Dead.” In Gary Rosen (ed.) *The Right War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70-72

⁷³ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Democracy Anxiety.” *The Weekly Standard*, February 2, 2004, 22

⁷⁴ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Who’s Afraid of Abu Ghraib.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 24, 2004, 30

Reporting from a trip to Baghdad Fred Barnes quipped, “Like the French, they may never forgive America for having liberated them.”⁷⁵ Yet as described in chapter four, the writers of the *Weekly Standard* consistently regarded the long-term benefits of democracy as a greater benefit than the short-term support given by authoritarian Arab regimes. Answering the criticism made by the *National Review* Tom Donnelly described the Realist search of stability since the late 1970s as elusive, leading to a steadily raising number of U.S. soldiers in the Middle East after each regional conflict.⁷⁶ The only real solution, Donnelly advocated, was to heed “President Bush’s basic strategic insight – that peace and stability in the Middle East depend on political reform and the spread of liberty,” and have a military strategy that went with that insight.

On the issue of security, Gerecht as well as Kagan and Kristol, continued their attacks on the Rumsfeld line, arguing how Iraqification could not succeed unless a certain threshold of stability could be reached, because if the threat for these new and untested soldiers was too high, they would simply run away or even defect to what they perceived as the winning side. They saw the first battle of Fallujah as typical of the half-measures that plagued the American strategy. After a takeover of Fallujah by Sunni insurgents, the U.S. went with a siege tactic that allowed the enemy to appear as brave Jihadists defying American power, and also used ex-officers from Saddam’s army to police the city after quelling the resistance (led by an officer with a stunning resemblance to Saddam).⁷⁷ The Sunni’s will to power had to be squelched if they were to become a part of compromise with the Shiites and Kurds. In their eagerness to describe a silver lining, and a way forward in Iraq, the *Weekly Standard* framed a narrative that to some extent glorified the Shiites and Kurds while portraying the Sunnis as bitterly longing for past benefits or swayed by Wahhabism. For Bremer and people within the administration the situation was more complicated regarding more Shiite involvement, as for instance Chalabi’s handling of de-Baathification continued to be a tool for widespread marginalizing of Sunnis, keeping records out of reach for Americans so there was really no way of keeping oversight.⁷⁸ As the government changed from Bremer’s Coalition Provisional Authority to Allawi’s interim government, Fred Barnes published an article titled “Our Man in Baghdad,” arguing that thanks to Bremer the center in Iraq held and is able to build upon

⁷⁵ Fred Barnes, “The Bumpy Road to Democracy in Iraq.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 5, 2004, 21

⁷⁶ Tom Donnelly, “Swift Invasion, Slow Victory.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 17, 2004, 12

⁷⁷ Reuel marc Gerecht, “What Is To Be Done in Iraq?” *The Weekly Standard*, May 3, 2004, 27 / “The Caravan Rolls On.” *The Weekly Standard*, June 7, 2004, 9

⁷⁸ L. Paul Bremer, *My Year In Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 260 / Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 295, 316

his achievements.⁷⁹ In Barnes' analysis the de-Baathification was necessary for keeping Shiites and Kurds on board, and he spent no time suggesting it had gone too far.

As the 2004 elections in the U.S. drew to a close, the criticism of administration policy in the Standard was silenced and replaced with the expected campaign journalism for a second Bush term. Only Gerecht noted in October 2004 how the more discreet role of U.S. soldiers, and more reliance on Iraqi police and security forces, had made crime and terror skyrocket in the Sunni triangle.⁸⁰ This analysis was correct as a report, secret at the time, showed a jump in successful assassination attempts go up from fifty percent to eighty-one percent between September and December 2004, as well as a threefold increase in the number of attacks, even while Pentagon boasted of rapidly rising numbers of Iraqi security forces.⁸¹ The Sunni insurgents were not driven by young men, but the old power-brokers. Where the recommendations differed from the position of the Standard was the conclusion that elections would be counter-productive as the Sunnis would boycott, thereby fueling the insurgency.⁸² Rumsfeld fought against any delay regarding the election, but was also critical to the notion that U.S. should go back on its Iraqification policy, using the analogy "If you're not willing to take your hand off the bicycle seat, the person will never learn to ride."⁸³ His 'tough love' strategy still failed to impress the writers of the Weekly Standard who in their post-election editorial strongly suggested Rumsfeld should be replaced with someone like John McCain or Joe Lieberman.⁸⁴ Tom Donnelly and especially Frederick Kagan continued to lambast Rumsfeld's strategy arguing that with more troops patrolling the infrastructure would be massive ammunition dumps Saddam left behind would not be in enemy hands, and cities like Fallujah would not become controlled by insurgents.⁸⁵ He also warned strongly against anyone believing that the problem would miraculously fade away after the national assembly election.

A Democratic Iraq

Two things were essential, in the view of the Weekly Standard writers, if the situation in Iraq was to turn a corner. The insurgents had to be denied cities they could use as a base for

⁷⁹ Fred Barnes, "Our Man in Baghdad." *The Weekly Standard*, July 26, 2004, 21

⁸⁰ Reuel Marc Gerecht, "The Battle for Iraq." *The Weekly Standard*, October 11, 2004, 26

⁸¹ Bob Woodward, *The War Within* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2008), 22 / Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 331

⁸² Bob Woodward, *The War Within* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2008), 25

⁸³ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 667

⁸⁴ "Happy Thanksgiving." *The Weekly Standard*, November 29, 2004, 7

⁸⁵ Frederick Kagan, "Fighting the Wrong War." *The Weekly Standard*, January 17, 2005, 19

operations, and equally important a symbol of defiance against the U.S. The other necessity was an elected government, which could channel frustration and ambition in legitimate ways.

In November 2004, after the U.S. election, the Bush administration once more faced a choice of what to do with Fallujah, which had for months been controlled by insurgents. There were two options, a settled solution as had largely been followed in the city of Najaf when it was in a similar situation, or a full-scale street-by-street invasion. According to Woodward the city had been turned into “terrorism central,” yet



Sunni leaders in Iraq pleaded with Washington that it should go for a settlement.⁸⁶ This time there was little discussion of what to do within the administration. As elections to the national assembly grew closer the insurgents could not be seen as having a state within the state. Fifteen thousand American soldiers along with two thousand Iraqi soldiers invaded the city, lost ninety-five U.S. troops, but killed more than a thousand insurgents.⁸⁷ In terms of security the taking of Fallujah made the insurgents adopt a new decentralized strategy, which did nothing to decrease their number of attacks, but they would never again have the political control over a city or a territory that they held in Fallujah. The Standard considered it a turning point, first of all in terms of destroying the infrastructure behind the insurgency, as Fallujah was considered a hub for supplies from Syria.⁸⁸ More importantly was the signal Kristol and others believed it had sent to the Sunnis, that there was no possibility of reversing the democratic process, and that violence was no longer viable as a means of ‘negotiating’ political influence. With the ‘Sunni street’ not rising up in outrage, Kristol interpreted it as a confirmation that anti-democratic forces had no power to change the outcome.⁸⁹ With the first Iraqi election moving closer Kristol now heard “faint but unmistakable” sounds of ice cracking throughout the Middle East. “If Iraq goes well,” Kristol argued, “the allegedly ‘utopian’ and ‘Wilsonian’ dreams of fundamental change in the broader Middle East won’t look so far-fetched.”

⁸⁶ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 359

⁸⁷ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 676

⁸⁸ Mackubin Thomas Owens, “Two, Three, Many Fallujahs.” *The Weekly Standard*, December 6, 2004, 8

⁸⁹ “The Iraq Promise.” *The Weekly Standard*, December 13, 2004, 9

In this time of severe security challenges the Weekly Standard held an enormous faith in the transformational effects of democracy. Gerecht argued that eighty percent of the Iraqi population was now on board, and that the Sunnis would regret their boycott if they got the sense they could lose it all.⁹⁰ As the parliamentary election was held he confidently stated “The January 30 elections in Iraq will easily be the most consequential event in modern Arab history since Israel’s six-day defeat of ... Nasser’s alliance in 1967. Israel’s pulverizing defeat... dethroned Nasserism, the romantic pan-Arab dictatorial nationalism that had infected much of the Arab world, particularly its intelligentsia, during the 1950s and ’60s.”⁹¹ In his analysis the Sunnis would feel sickened by seeing the Shiite Arabs, widely thought of as backwards, take the lead. This would make them impatient with the lack of progress, economically and socially, of their own authoritarian regimes. Gerecht’s advice was to create an Iraqi C-SPAN, a channel that covers the proceedings of government, in both Arab and Farsi. Kristol and Kagan held the same sentiments and gave a critique of the commentators that stuck to their skepticism, like Fareed Zakaria.⁹²

Zakaria’s reception was lukewarm, as he predicted Iraq to become a corrupt quasi democracy like Russia or Nigeria.⁹³ In Zakaria’s view a functioning democracy needed to have a consensus between ethnic, regional, or religious groups, if not it would just strengthen the communalism that fuels instability. Secondly if oil becomes a too prominent factor in the economy, the government really has no need of its citizens and become unwilling to allow real participation or the development of a vital economy. Kagan and Kristol’s answer was that while his points were valid, there could be neither democracy nor liberalism without elections. They disdained the notion, held by both Zakaria and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, that there could be liberalizing authoritarianism that could slowly expand the liberal sphere until the people had the required amount of middle-class citizens and GDP per capita. An article in March 2005 by Dan Senor, a former senior advisor for the Coalition Provisional Authority, noted a number of improvements.⁹⁴ He portrayed Iraqis as now protesting against the government rather than the Americans, more female representation in the assembly than in the U.S. Congress, a striking lack of obsession with Israel, and a general pride in being ‘first’ in various aspects of modernization. These developments were not as easily reversible as many claimed, Senor argued, as a political constituency is being created, with the ability to strike

⁹⁰ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “The Struggle for the Middle East.” *The Weekly Standard*, January 3, 2005, 22

⁹¹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Birth of a Democracy.” *The Weekly Standard*, February 14, 2005, 19

⁹² “A Realigning Election.” *The Weekly Standard*, February 14, 2005, 7

⁹³ Fareed Zakaria, “Elections Are Not Democracy.” : <http://archive.truthout.org/article/fareed-zakaria-elections-are-not-democracy> (accessed 31.10.2012)

⁹⁴ Dan Senor, “Meanwhile, Back in Baghdad.” *The Weekly Standard*, March 21, 2005, 20

back at Islamist demands (the quota is still in place by the time of writing). The lack of security in the spring of 2005 was only touched upon in the dubious quote by CENTCOM commander General Abizaid: “Each time an Iraqi soldier is killed, another steps up to take his place.” As good Republicans, the writers of the *Weekly Standard* most likely saw both political and economic liberalization as key aspects of developing a free Iraq. Yet there are few explicit arguments for reorganizing the Iraqi economy along neoliberal lines, although this could be because such persuasion was never needed. In his April 2004 report Fred Barnes confidently argued how “money will enter an Iraqi economy that suddenly is among the freest in the world. Iraq has no tariffs or duties, a flat tax rate of 15 percent, no restrictions on capital investment.”⁹⁵

The first six months after the election the coverage of Iraqi affairs dropped considerably. It seemed similar to the benign neglect they gave Iraq the first months after the invasion, as they let the administration’s strategy run its course. Now it seemed the *Weekly Standard* waited for the beneficial ripple effects from the election to spread. Or they simply lacked a strategy for managing the situation beyond what the administration pursued. The magazine seemed resigned to the fact that Rumsfeld would continue to be Secretary of Defense until at least the mid-term elections in 2006, and moderately satisfied that he had toned down his insistence on Iraqification.⁹⁶ As the *Weekly Standard* reached its ten-year anniversary in September 2005, the editorial strongly defended a ‘stay the course’ policy of staying in Iraq, arguing that “if Iraq is the central front in the war on terror, who cares about dependency theory? ... Don’t we need to dishearten terrorists in Iraq and around the world who, as the president said, ‘want us to retreat’? *We* need to win in Iraq. We’re not doing someone else a favor.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Fred Barnes, “The Bumpy Road to Democracy in Iraq.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 5, 2004, 21

⁹⁶ Michael Beckley, “The End of the Beginning.” *The Weekly Standard*, April 11, 2005, 18

⁹⁷ “The War Presidency.” *The Weekly Standard*, September 5, 2005, 7

Conclusion

Before the 2012 Presidential election, the renowned Realist Stephen Walt wondered about what seemed as the unsinkable resiliency of the neoconservative movement.¹ Even if their influence reached its peak during the George W. Bush administration, neoconservatives sustained their ability to affect how foreign policy was discussed. Walt attributed this to ‘bracketing,’ where recommending policies that are at the very edge of acceptable made a less extreme, but hawkish position, seem like the center. Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, in *America Alone*, had a similar theory and argued how a web of deception was created through a process they call “‘discursive construction of reality,’ [which] uses language to create a reality different from that which existed prior to the use of the language.”² In other words the notion that Saddam has WMDs, and was an urgent threat, was made a ‘proven fact’ by saying so repeatedly.

In both these analyses the *Weekly Standard*, and others of the same persuasion, were ascribed sinister motives and methods; they inflated threats, and were not above using ‘noble lies’ to affect policy. The most important discovery of this thesis is that this line of argument is misleading. Optimists make the world, because pessimists never even try, and it is the underlying optimism that has been the pillar of the *Standard’s* argumentation. Contrary to Realists, neoconservatives put a lot of faith in the ‘bandwagon effect.’ The belief that seemingly limited events could create a momentum, because states and actors fear of being on the losing side of geopolitics.³ This has appealed to people with the power to shape policy, because rather than being trapped in a historical structure, they could stake out a lasting legacy by acting decisively at the right time, or lose the momentum by failing to act. By halting the rogue behavior of Serbia, it would send a signal to similar rogue states making them adjust their behavior, and also rid America of its ‘Vietnam syndrome.’ By invading Iraq,



¹ http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/24/the_genius_of_neoconservatism (accessed 11.09.2012)

² Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clark, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 306

³ Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 116

and creating a democracy, the historical direction of the entire Middle East could be changed. What the *Weekly Standard* has done consistently is to paint a picture of possible strategic benefits; playing on people's fears has not been the dominant theme. The Jeffersonian isolationism, whether articulated by Ron Paul or Noam Chomsky, has failed to become a 'bracket' of U.S. foreign policy discourse because it mainly promoted a stale morality play about things that have been done before.

In August 2003 Irving Kristol wrote an article in the *Standard* on neoconservatism. He described how America, a nation of immigrants, needed patriotism to hold its diverse elements together.⁴ Because of way the U.S. was founded, it had an ideological identity, which made for an ideological patriotism. Echoing this sentiment, the *Weekly Standard* had always preferred the patriotism of Theodore Roosevelt over Woodrow Wilson, who they rarely mention. Despite this, the neoconservatives of the *Standard* have largely been known as 'hard Wilsonians,' or 'Wilsonians with boots.'⁵ Rather than being one or the other, they are a peculiar mix of those two strands. According to Realist theory, if a state becomes stronger, other states will form alliances to balance against the rising state. When this did not happen after the Cold War, neoconservatives like Robert Kagan and William Kristol concluded that because of its liberal principles, its hegemony was tolerated to such a degree that only symbolic resistance occurred.⁶ According to Kristol and Kagan, Roosevelt was no believer in utopianism, or that war could ever be abolished, but believed "that the defenders of civilization must exercise their power against civilization's opponents."⁷ This notion is then pulled firmly into Wilsonian territory. As the liberal ideology counteracts any natural demarcation to the sphere of interest, it grows as far as U.S. resources and resolve allow it to grow. As it is also deeply connected to American national identity and self-esteem, the shouldering of international burdens are not seen as a problem in itself. It is necessary to note that this is just the natural end-point of the philosophy, as it was proclaimed at a time when the American economy was booming and defense expenditure steadily sinking. What stands as a constant is that neoconservatives have always taken ideology seriously, seeing America dependent on a sense of mission. In this way the country is seen as more similar to revolutionary states (like the Soviet Union), than ancient nation-states like France.

⁴ Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion." *The Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003, 23

⁵ The term 'Wilsonians with boots' was coined by Pierre Hassner, and used by John Ikenberry and Justin Vaïsse, amongst others

⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 102

⁷ Robert Kagan and William Kristol (ed.), *Present Danger: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), 23



The *Weekly Standard* has also had a penchant for constructing clear narratives. From the days of the first generation of neoconservatism, the emphasis on narrative in foreign policy discussions has been a central theme. They eagerly defended the early Cold War narrative of the stark contrast between America and the Soviet Union, as it came under attack by critics. After the Cold War the writers of the *Standard* continued to emphasize the contrasts between order and chaos, between the ideology of liberal democracy and the totalitarian substance of Wahhabism, of which al Qaeda

was merely a symptom. The narrative was of made more epic by using historical allusions, like William Kristol's use of "the end of the beginning of the War on Terror" (see Chapter Five), in which he paraphrased Winston Churchill's words after the battle of El Alamein, or the many references to Harry Truman. The clear narrative, which included the sweeping depictions of Shiite and Sunni traditions, helped formulate a way forward in the War on Terror even as times got rough.

In terms of results, the writers of the *Weekly Standard* were in general more satisfied with the results of the Bosnian and Kosovo intervention than what seemed to be the case in a magazine like *Foreign Affairs*. The *Standard* had patience with the process of nation-building, and showed satisfaction that the Balkans was taken out of the geo-political picture during the War on Terror, where the Muslim populations seemed immune to Wahhabist propaganda (see Chapter Four). In the Middle East, the visionary perspective on what U.S. power could accomplish seemed to end with President George W. Bush. In January 2012 Tom Donnelly's analysis was that "Obama has been resolute in viewing the post-9/11 wars narrowly as antiterror campaigns rather than in the larger context of traditional U.S. strategy across the greater Middle East. A more comprehensive view would consider the 2003 Iraq war as an extension of a trend..."⁸ In other words, even as Obama's policy proscribed extensive use of drones to kill al Qaeda affiliated Islamists, and in general pursuing an activist Middle East policy, the liberal dream of the Bush years had been replaced by mere crisis-control. Reuel Marc Gerechta lamented how "the president, his Predators, ... loom large because Republicans

⁸ Thomas Donnelly, "The Obama Way of War." *The Weekly Standard*, January 30, 2012

have become so small. The world that George W. Bush gave them they cannot handle.”⁹ In a sense the ascendancy of drones as an essential part of U.S. military had brought back a similar situation to the one criticized by the *Standard* during the Clinton years. With the use of drones, a dovish president could act tough against America’s adversaries without committing the U.S. towards solving the problem itself. Once again, Gerecht pointed out, U.S. policy was led into the strategic trap of seeing terrorists as independent of the states that sponsor them.¹⁰

On the issue of Iraq, the almost nine-year presence of U.S. combat troops failed to achieve a solid liberal framework for the new Iraqi state. As the level of violence increased in the months following the American exit, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki managed to overcome the inherent liberal aspects of his Shiite identity, and consolidate his personal control over parliament, while seriously marginalizing Sunnis and Kurds.¹¹ The *Weekly Standard* had been skeptical towards American withdrawal all along, as it would remove any U.S. leverage with both Shiites and Sunnis. Yet the American presence did manage to prevent, at the time of writing, a serious civil war as happened to Syria. The new Iraqi government got the time needed to achieve enough legitimacy and resilience to uphold a certain degree of security and order.

The silver lining for the *Weekly Standard*’s Middle East project was the Arab Spring of 2011. The regime change in Iraq, coupled with Bush’s attempt at a ‘freedom agenda,’ forcefully started a debate on democracy in the Arab countries. Following the Iraqi election in 2005, Gerecht argued that Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia were ripe for a democratic revolution, while the sectarian structure in Syria made it a country unsuited for liberal democracy in the short term.¹² In Tunisia and Egypt, this prediction came to pass. There has also been a steady pressure on most of the authoritarian regimes, with revolutions also occurring in Libya and Yemen. While it is much too soon to conclude how these governments will end up, there has been a wave of change in a region politically frozen for thirty years. With Egypt the writers of the *Standard* have kept a position as cautious optimists, who strongly believe in the benefits of a liberal political marketplace, but have also recognized the strong anti-Americanism/Israel that permeates every group of Egyptian society.

Finally, the issue of Afghanistan began to take a more prominent role in the pages of the *Weekly Standard* after the situation in Iraq was stabilized. Regime change in Afghanistan had not been a priority for the magazine before the Bush administration adopted the policy in

⁹ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Obama’s Way of War.” *The Weekly Standard*, May 14, 2012

¹⁰ Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Drones Are Not Enough.” *The Weekly Standard*, February 6, 2012, 25

¹¹ Frederick Kagan and Kimberly Kagan, “Is Iraq Lost?” *The Weekly Standard*, January 2, 2012

¹² Reuel Marc Gerecht, “What Hath Ju-Ju Wrought!” *The Weekly Standard*, March 14, 2005, 22

the months after 9/11. In the first year after the successful invasion *Standard* writers repeatedly called for more troops (see Chapter Four). It is unknown whether Frederick Kagan's estimate of twenty thousand troops (a number reached in 2004), or Donnelly's fifty thousand (reached in 2009) would have created a different momentum in Afghanistan in 2002. The U.S. had a six-month window without any Taliban presence, and even when Taliban commanders returned, it took some time until they got in a position to gain revenue from the opium farming.¹³ According to U.S. Army estimates, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the insurgents fought within five kilometers from their own homes.¹⁴ With this in mind, a larger presence and involvement in local communities could have had the effect of discouraging potential insurgents. On the other hand the very presence of foreign troops seemed to affect the pride of the Afghan population and breed resistance. Also, with the same number of people as Iraq, but living far more decentralized, there was no possibility of having anything close to the same presence as the Coalition forces had in Iraq. As Obama effectuated his surge of troops in Afghanistan, Max Boot remained optimistic, noting that the surge had increased security in Afghanistan, except in the East.¹⁵ Yet as the surge ended, and Obama moved towards a rapid rate of withdrawal, the *Weekly Standard* as a whole predicted a reversal of the gains achieved.

The historian Brandon High described the *Weekly Standard* as not aspiring to appeal primarily to intellectuals, with their relatively short articles, but to policy makers.¹⁶ The *Standard* has since its beginning focused on compact, objective oriented articles. Yet by following the magazine over a prolonged period of time, as this thesis has done, it is discovered how ideological arguments are advanced implicitly over a number of articles. This study has analyzed the first ten years of the *Weekly Standard*, a time where the magazine found its identity both as promoter and as a defender of a set of policies. It has sought to distill the essence of the arguments promoted, and shared amongst the main writers.

At the time of writing the *Weekly Standard* has been around for more than seventeen years. It has succeeded in keeping itself relevant to the Republican discourse in the years after the Bush opposition. In 2009 ownership changed hands from Rupert Murdoch to the politically active entrepreneur Philip F. Anschutz.¹⁷ Although Anschutz has been seen as a religious conservative, he asked the *Standard* editors not to alter the publication's ideological

¹³ Astri Suhrke, *Eksperimentet Afghanistan* (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag AS, 2011), 58

¹⁴ Astri Suhrke, *Eksperimentet Afghanistan* (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag AS, 2011), 71

¹⁵ Max Boot, "They Can Do It." *The Weekly Standard*, November 14, 2011

¹⁶ Brandon High, "The Recent Historiography of American Neoconservatism." *The Historical Journal*, 52, 2, 2009, 488

¹⁷ Tim Arango, "New Owner for a Magazine as Political Tastes Change." *The New York Times*, August 2, 2009

complexion. This is an ideology that has left its mark on the American history of ideas, and the making of U.S. foreign policy.

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