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Explaining Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy: 9/11, the Rise of Offensive Liberalism, and the War in Iraq

BENJAMIN MILLER

This paper proposes a model for explaining shifts and variations in U.S. grand strategy. The model is based on a distinction between four ideal-type grand strategies or ideational approaches to security according to the objectives and means of security policy: defensive and offensive realism, and defensive and offensive liberalism. While the four approaches are continually present in the U.S. policy community, it is the combination of two systemic conditions—namely the distribution of capabilities and the balance of threat—that selects among the competing approaches and determines which grand strategy is likely to emerge as dominant in a given period. Great power parity is conducive to realist approaches. In contrast, a situation of hegemony encourages the emergence of ideological

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grand strategies, which focus on ideology promotion, according to the ideology of the hegemon. In the case of a liberal hegemon, such as the United States, liberal approaches are likely to emerge as dominant. In addition, a relative absence of external threat encourages defensive approaches, while a situation of high external threat gives rise to offensive strategies. Thus, various combinations of these systemic factors give rise to the emergence of various grand strategies. This model is tested in two cases of the two most recent shifts in U.S. grand strategy following 1991. In accordance with the expectations of the model, a change in the distribution of capabilities with the end of the Cold War made possible a change from realist to liberal strategies. In the benign environment of the 1990s the dominant strategy was defensive liberalism, while the change in the balance of threat after 9/11 gave rise to the grand strategy of offensive liberalism.

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THE PUZZLE

How can we account for variations and shifts in U.S. grand strategy? Namely, why does the United States adopt a certain grand strategy in a certain period, and why does it switch from one strategy to another? In the past two decades we have witnessed two such transitions in U.S. grand strategy. The first transition took place from the Cold War period to the 1990s, and it was manifested in a greater U.S. willingness to undertake limited humanitarian interventions. The second transition took place a decade later, following 9/11. The new strategy included, notably, a willingness to promote democracy by the use of force, as reflected in the 2002 Bush Doctrine and carried out in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The United States intervened with a massive force in a sensitive region, in the absence of any immediate Iraqi threat to its security, with the explicit purpose of democracy promotion. This raises the question why democracy promotion by the use of force has become such a prominent objective of U.S. grand strategy under the George W. Bush administration.

In accounting for these variations and transitions in U.S. grand strategy, we should consider some major debates in International Relations (IR) theory in recent years. These debates revolve around the question whether foreign and security policy (and especially the choice of grand strategy) is determined by material or ideational factors, and also around the question whether this policy is determined by external or domestic factors. While realism focuses on such systemic-material factors as the state's relative power and the presence (or absence) of significant external threats to its security in accounting for its choice of grand strategy, constructivists attribute great importance to ideas, culture, and norms (both international and domestic).

Different variants of liberalism attribute differential weight to material versus normative factors in affecting grand strategy. Domestic approaches, for their part, focus on such factors as the domestic regime and internal politics of the state and on the individual level of analysis—the belief systems of leaders and, in the U.S. context in particular, on the worldviews of particular presidents.[1]

Several major studies have recently dealt with the question of U.S. grand strategy and the relative weight of external-material versus domestic-ideational factors affecting it. However, they are unable to account for the variations in U.S. grand strategy mentioned above. Thus, Jonathan Monten develops a useful distinction between two variants of U.S. liberalism in foreign affairs (parallel to what will be introduced here as "offensive" versus "defensive" liberalism), but is unable to account for the major change in the Bush Administration's security policy before and after 9/11. By focusing on the continuous influence of liberal culture on U.S. foreign policy (qualified by limited liability), Colin Dueck is unable to account for the differences in U.S. grand strategy between the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras, let alone for the variations within each of these periods. Similarly, in concentrating on what he sees as the persistent U.S. quest for hegemony stemming from the "open door" policy, Christopher Layne overlooks great variations in this quest during the Cold War and between the Cold War and the post-Cold War era, as discussed here.[2]

THE ARGUMENT

In accounting for the puzzle of variations and changes in U.S. grand strategy, this article proposes a theoretical model for explaining great power choices of grand strategy. The model is in principle applicable to any great power, but in this article it will be applied specifically to the United States. The model makes the following arguments. First, I distinguish among four possible ideal-type great power grand strategies or approaches to security, according to the objectives and the means of security policy advanced by

[1] For realist approaches to grand strategy, see Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001); and Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). For the constructivist approach, see Peter Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). For a variety of domestic perspectives on grand strategy, see Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, ed., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[2] See Jonathan Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," *International Security* 29, no. 4 (Spring 2005): 112–56; Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

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each approach. In the case of the United States, these approaches are offensive realism, defensive realism, defensive liberalism, and offensive liberalism. These approaches are sets of ideas shared by policy makers about how to maximize state security, and thus they are an ideational factor. Most of the contending approaches to security have been present in most U.S. administrations, or at least in the influential policy community. Their continuous presence under the same liberal political culture indicates that culture by itself does not determine the nature of U.S. grand strategy.[3] There are often domestic debates within the U.S. administration or in the policy community over the "correct" approach to security. However, one approach usually emerges as the dominant one in a given period (even if the others never completely fade away). The changes in the relative dominance of the four ideational approaches to security—or the grand strategies—are the dependent variables of this study.

The second step of the argument addresses the question of what factors—or independent variables—determine which one of these contending approaches to security will win in the domestic debate and emerge as the grand strategy that a great power, or specifically the United States, pursues at a given time. Rather than arguing that the outcome of the debate depends on such domestic-ideational factors as the vagaries of domestic politics or leaders' beliefs, I advance a material-systemic explanation of U.S. grand strategy. Namely, I argue that the international material environment works as the *selector* of ideas, and it determines which approach to security is likely to emerge as the winner and dominate U.S. security policy in a certain period. The two systemic factors are the distribution of power in the international system and the degree of external threat faced by the United States. Various combinations of these systemic factors are conducive to the emergence and dominance of various grand strategies, and changes in these systemic factors lead to changes in U.S. grand strategy over time. This does not imply that any security strategy is correct in any circumstance, but only that given a certain combination of systemic factors, it is likely to prove attractive to the policy makers.

The model proposed in this paper combines systemic-material and domestic-ideational factors in an integrated theoretical framework.[4] Namely, while the ideational factors (the four contending approaches to security) are

[3] For various classifications of competing approaches to U.S. grand strategy, see Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter l996): 5–53; Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Knopf, 2001); Henry Nau, *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine"; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*; and Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*. See also Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*.

[4] Such a theoretical integration can be affiliated with neoclassical realism. See Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998): 144–72; and Randall Schweller, "The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism," in *Progress in International Relations Theory*, eds., Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 311–47. On

the dependent variables, the ultimate selection among them is made by the systemic conditions, and therefore it is these conditions that are the basic explanatory factors.

I should note that while realism is usually associated with independent variables, in this article I use this term to indicate the dependent variable—that is, a particular "realist" grand strategy or approach to security. Used in this sense, it represents an ideational rather than a material factor—namely, a certain set of ideas about how to achieve security. As an ideational approach to security (a grand strategy), realism is prescriptive—it suggests how the state should maximize its security. The systemic-material factors that are the independent variables of the model proposed here, on the other hand, are explanatory—they specify the material conditions under which each of the grand strategies is going to be the dominant one. Thus, the systemic conditions do not necessarily encourage the emergence of realist grand strategies. Indeed, some combinations of systemic conditions are conducive to liberal grand strategies. Thus, whereas the dependent variables—the four grand strategies—are ideational, the independent variables are essentially material. This material international environment selects the dominant ideational approach to security or great power grand strategy.

There are two major intervening variables through which the systemic conditions are translated into changes in grand strategy. These are the variables that are situated between the basic causal factors and the outcomes. These intervening domestic variables are not the underlying causes of changes in U.S. grand strategy, but are part of the causal chain—that is, a description of how changes in the values of the independent variables change the values of the dependent variable.[5] The two intervening variables are decision-makers' perceptions and beliefs at the individual level of analysis, and the domestic balance of influence among the four grand strategies at the domestic level of analysis. The influence of these two intervening factors may be described in terms of two causal chains. In the first causal chain, when an administration takes office, it will be initially guided by the belief-systems of the key decision makers. Yet, major changes in the international system may compel the administration to change its initial foreign policy inclinations or worldviews in order to adapt to the new threats or opportunities coming from the changing environment. Under these changing conditions, it might be too costly to persist with the same grand strategy. Indeed, changes in grand strategy under the same presidency suggest that leaders' preexisting beliefs do not by themselves determine the character of

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combining material incentives and ideas, see also Richard Herrmann and Richard Lebow, *Ending the Cold War: Interpretations, Causation, and the Study of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 14–15, 139–43.

[5] See Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), esp. 246n27.

U.S. grand strategy. Examples include the major changes in the Jimmy Carter administration's foreign policy in a more offensive direction following the growing Soviet expansion in the late 1970s, and the Ronald Reagan administration's opposite shift from an offensive to a more defensive grand strategy following the benign changes in Soviet behavior in the mid-1980s.

In the second causal chain, systemic factors in the international environment help to determine the outcome of domestic battles among the advocates of the competing approaches to security. A key example is discussed in this paper—the effects of 9/11 on the rise of offensive liberalism in the U.S. political system. While the offensive liberal approach to foreign policy was part of the U.S. domestic debate in the 1990s**,** it was the changing international/systemic conditions after 9/11 that made it much more appealing than it was previously and provided a great opportunity for this approach to dominate U.S. grand strategy. This does not mean that this strategy was the correct one for maximizing U.S. national security; it only means that the external systemic conditions increased the domestic attractiveness of this approach and thus allowed it to shape U.S. grand strategy. The two intervening variables can work in tandem: I will show that in addition to increasing the domestic influence of offensive liberalism, the changing systemic conditions following 9/11 also brought about a change in the beliefs of the Bush administration with regard to security that resulted in its adoption of the offensive liberal program.

Figure 1 presents the two causal chains that can bring about changes in great power grand strategy.

This paper is organized in four sections: the first section describes the four competing grand strategies or approaches to security; the second section presents the systemic model for the relative dominance of the four grand strategies; and the third and fourth sections provide a partial empirical examination of the model, in explaining the two most recent transitions in U.S. grand strategy in the post-Cold War era. The third section discusses briefly the decade of 1991–2001 and the emergence of defensive liberalism as a dominant U.S. strategy. The fourth section examines in greater detail the

The Causal Chains	**Independent Variables**	**Intervening Variables**	**Dependent Variables**
Chain I	Changes in the external environment	Changing decision-makers' perceptions and beliefs	Changing grand strategy
Chain II	Changes in the external environment	Changing balance of influence in the domestic battles over grand strategy	Changing grand strategy

FIGURE 1 The Two Causal Chains.

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post-9/11 rise of offensive liberalism and its application to U.S. policy in the Middle East, especially regarding the war in Iraq.

Even though the Iraq War is a single case, it is a crucial one for the Bush administration—it is the case which defined his presidency and his grand strategy in the area of security, with many far-reaching and continuous implications for the United States, Iraq, the Middle East, and the international system as a whole. This is the key case in which the post-9/11 Bush Doctrine played a major role, and it is important for the purposes of both theory and policy to understand the conditions under which this could take place. The two realist approaches to security are not examined empirically in this article (beyond brief examples) due to lack of space.

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THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Four Grand Strategies—Four Ideational Approaches to Security

As a first step toward explaining the dependent variables—the variations in U.S. grand strategy—I distinguish among four possible ideal-type approaches to security or grand strategy, according to the objectives and the means of security policy advanced by each approach.[6] With regard to the objectives of security policy, the distinction is between strategies that focus on affecting the balance of capabilities vis-à-vis the opponent (realist grand strategies) and strategies that focus on ideology promotion (ideological grand strategies). For example, in the case of a liberal great power, ideological grand strategies focus on promoting democracy and free market economies.[7] With regard to the means of security policy, the distinction is between offensive and defensive approaches to resorting to force. While the offensive security strategies advocate massive and unilateral use of military force, the defensive strategies support minimal and multilateral use of force. The distinction between unilateralism and multilateralism as employed here is based not on the number of coalition members, or not even necessarily on the blessing of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), but rather on the extent of institutional freedom of action allowed to the most powerful member by its coalition. To qualify as truly multilateral, it is necessary for a coalition not to be only "a coalition of the willing," (that is, a coalition willing to follow the hegemon's lead), but to be able to impose institutional constraints on the hegemon's freedom of action. For the United States it means, for example,

[6] Due to lack of space, I introduce here a very brief summary of the four grand strategies—for a much more extended treatment and numerous references, see Benjamin Miller, "Explaining Changes in US Grand Strategy: The Rise of Offensive Liberalism and the War in Iraq," The Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, March 2008, esp. 11–25.

[7] On realist and liberal approaches in international relations, see Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: Norton, 1997); Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005), chap. 1, and Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* 145 (November/December 2004): 52–61.

working within the institutional constraints of the UNSC (with the veto power of the five permanent members), but also, notably, NATO—where there is a need to reach a consensus with the allies.[8] In other words, while UNSC blessing is a sufficient condition for a military intervention to be qualified as multilateral, it is not a necessary one. If the coalition is unable to impose institutional constraints on the hegemon's freedom of military action, even if it has numerous members, the military intervention should be considered a unilateral action by the hegemon supported by a "coalition of the willing."

Whereas the distinction between offensive and defensive realism is a familiar one,[9] students of IR theory have tended to overlook the fact that a parallel distinction can be drawn within an ideology-promotion perspective. Most notably, it is possible to distinguish within the liberal perspective between offensive and defensive variants, or branches, of liberalism. Both liberal approaches focus on the benign influence of democracy on the external behavior of states and on international security and thus call to promote democracy, but they differ with respect to the means of democracy promotion. While defensive liberalism favors the promotion of democracy by peaceful means, the offensive approach advocates democracy promotion by the use of force if necessary.

The various combinations of these two dimensions produce four ideal types of great power approaches to security (see Figure 2): offensive realism, defensive realism, defensive ideology promotion, and offensive ideology promotion. A combination of maximal use of force in a unilateral manner aimed at affecting the capabilities of the adversary produces an offensive realist strategy; defensive realism refers to a minimal use of force in a multilateral manner for affecting the balance of capabilities; defensive ideology promotion emphasizes the spread of ideology multilaterally by peaceful means; while offensive ideology promotion focuses on effecting regime change unilaterally and by the use of force.

If ideology promotion is done by a liberal power, such as the United States, then defensive liberalism focuses on the use of "soft power" in a multilateral manner for promoting democracy, free-market economies, and international institutions, and thus affecting the rival's ideological character.[10] In contrast, offensive liberals are willing to use massive force in a unilateral manner in order to promote democracy and affect the rival's ideology.[11] This

[8] On the qualification of NATO as multilateral alongside the UNSC, see Sarah E. Kreps, "Multilateral Military Interventions: Theory and Practice," *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 4 (2008/09): 587n39.

[9] For useful overviews and citations, see Jeffery Taliaferro, "Security-Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Reconsidered," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2000/01): 128–61, and Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*.

[10] On soft power and multilateralism, see Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[11] On the philosophical roots of this enduring debate within liberalism regarding the use of force to spread democracy, see Thomas C. Walker, "Two Faces of Liberalism: Kant, Paine, and the Question of Intervention," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 449–68.

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The Objectives Vis-à-vis the Adversary	The Means of Security Policy: The Approach to Power and the Use of Force	
	Maximalist/Unilateral	**Minimalist/Multilateral**
Focus on the Balance of Capabilities with the Rival (Realist Grand Strategy)	**Offensive Realism** Quest for superiority/ hegemony, including by a unilateral resort to force.	**Defensive Realism** Focus on security maximization through balancing, deterrence, and multilateral arms control.
Focus on Ideology Promotion (Ideological Grand Strategy)	**Offensive Ideology Promotion** Emphasis on regime change through the use of force (ideological crusades) Offensive Liberalism and imposed democratization in the case of the United States	**Defensive Ideology Promotion** Emphasis on soft power, international institutions, and the diplomacy of conflict resolution Defensive Liberalism and the spread of democracy and free trade by peaceful means in the case of the United States

FIGURE 2 The Four Grand Strategies.

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distinction is reflected in the long-time debate in U.S. foreign policy between supporters of "exemplarism" (which is associated here with defensive liberalism) and "crusaders" or supporters of "vindicationism" (called here offensive liberalism).[12]

Since multilateralism tends to be associated with liberalism, readers might be puzzled by the link between defensive realism and multilateralism made here. However, defensive realists believe—similarly to defensive liberals—that security should be achieved interdependently (that is, multilaterally) rather than unilaterally. In contrast to the defensive liberals, however, defensive realists emphasize hard power more than soft power. Defensive realists believe that no power can be secure if the military capabilities of other powers are vulnerable because, especially under crisis conditions, they might be compelled to strike first for fear lest they "use it or lose it." Such a situation is unstable and dangerous to all parties involved. Hence, an important component of security according to the logic of defensive realism are mutual security arrangements and confidence-building measures that enhance transparency and reduce the possibility of a surprise attack, thus mitigating mutual fears of being attacked. States should strive, through arms control agreements, to construct such a balance of military capabilities that no one has an incentive to attack first. Arms control, in this view, is intended to decrease the offensive capabilities of states while enhancing defensive ones

[12] See Walter MacDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

in non-provocative ways, and thus can reduce the security dilemma and the danger of inadvertent escalation and provide mutual reassurance.[13]

The four approaches constitute the ideational preferences or inclinations of various leaders and groups within a great power's policy community with regard to the choice of grand strategy, adopted on the basis of their values, belief systems, and worldviews. While only one of the approaches is likely to dominate the great power's grand strategy at a given time, the other approaches may be latent within its polity, as contenders in an on-going domestic debate in the "marketplace of ideas" on the best grand strategy, namely on the best way to maximize security.[14] As noted, both the realist and the ideological approaches are applicable to any great power. The liberal strategies are one set of ideological grand strategies that are suited to a liberal great power such as the United States, on which this article focuses. Yet the theory does not apply only to the U.S. grand strategy. According to the model, a great power tends to adopt an ideological approach in accordance with its ideological preferences. Thus, illiberal great powers will adopt an ideological approach parallel to offensive or defensive liberalism, namely one that focuses on the peaceful or forcible promotion of their ideology—be it Confucianism, conservative monarchism, Islamism, or communism.

The Model: The Systemic Conditions for the Rise of the Four Strategies

While some existing studies distinguish between competing grand strategies, they fail to provide a parsimonious theoretical explanation as to the conditions under which each of the competing strategies is likely to emerge.[15] Here I provide such an explanation, based on the combined effects of two key systemic factors. While elements of realism and liberalism are always present in U.S. grand strategy, these systemic factors determine the relative dominance of each of the four approaches in the foreign policy of the United States at a given time and the likelihood of its acceptance by the U.S. domestic political system. Thus, for example, while both realist and liberal components were present in U.S. grand strategy during the Cold War, generally realpolitik considerations overrode liberal impulses when it came to the grand strategy vis-à-vis the key opponent—the other superpower (see Figure 3).[16]

[13] Charles Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994/95): 50–90.

[14] See Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); and Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*.

[15] See, for example, Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy"; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*; and Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*.

[16] However, liberal strategies were dominant in U.S. relations with its western liberal allies, since the power differentials among them made the United States the hegemonic power in the western camp in the Cold War era.

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The Balance of Threat	The Global Distribution of Capabilities	
	Hegemony	**Great Power Parity**
High External Threat	**Offensive Ideology Promotion → Offensive Liberalism** **Post-September 11** (Key case: the invasion of Iraq)	**Offensive Realism** **The Height of the Cold War** (1947-62, 1979-85)
Benign Environment	**Defensive Ideology Promotion → Defensive Liberalism** **1991-2001**	**Defensive Realism** **Détente** (1963-78, 1985-90)

FIGURE 3 The Systemic Conditions for the Dominance of the Competing Grand Strategies: The Case of the United States Since 1947.

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The Global Distribution of Capabilities

This factor distinguishes between a situation of great power parity (bipolarity or multipolarity) and the presence of a single predominant power (unipolarity)—that is, a global hegemon. In general, the distribution of capabilities selects between the realist and the ideological approaches to security. When there is a single hegemon, the costs of pursuing an ideological security strategy that accords with its domestic values and preferences are much lower than in a situation of great power parity, because of the high freedom of action the hegemon enjoys in the absence of a powerful countervailing rival or coalition. As Waltz argues, "in the absence of counterweights, a country's internal impulses prevail, whether fueled by liberal or other urges."[17] In other words, it is mainly under the conditions of hegemony that the regime type of the great power significantly influences its choice of grand strategy. Hegemony is a permissive condition for pursuing an ideological foreign policy (which in the case of a liberal hegemon means liberal foreign policy, but if the hegemon follows a different ideology, then its foreign policy will tend to advance that ideology). Thus, when there is a global hegemon with a strong liberal orientation, liberalism may have a field day.

However, in a situation of great power parity, realist approaches tend to dominate and override the ideological ones. The competition with other great powers compels the state to focus on the balance of capabilities with the rival powers that possess the capacity to harm its security, either in order to balance their capabilities (defensive realism) or to surpass them and reach superiority (offensive realism). Attempts to influence the rivals' ideology in such a situation may seem both futile and dangerous. The external constraints on the great power's freedom of action reduce the appeal of costly ideological crusades, which are seen as a luxury in such a situation.

[17] Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," in *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power*, ed. John Ikenberry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 48.

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The Degree of External Threat Facing the Great Power

The second systemic factor distinguishes between a benign international environment and an environment laden with high external security threats to the great power. The degree of threat may be assessed as follows: a high-threat environment is present when the opponent is both able (that is, has an offensive power-projection capability) and willing (as demonstrated by aggressive behavior) to inflict heavy damage upon the great power. If only one of these necessary conditions is present (power-projection capability or aggressive behavior), or if none of them is present, then the system is benign.

Thus, the degree of threat variable as presented in this article is based partly on a material component, namely offensive power-projection capabilities (which are distinctive from the overall aggregate balance of capabilities).[18] Accordingly, the presence of rivals who possess such capabilities is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for producing a threatening environment. However, the threat variable is not a purely material one, because in addition to material power, it is also based on the state's perception of the opponent's aggressive intentions. The opponent's intentions introduce a perceptual component into the discussion of threat, but I assume that the state's perception of the rival's intentions is primarily influenced by the rival's own behavior—whether it is aggressive or benign. The perceptions of the rival's intentions are often shaped by a formative event such as a major international crisis, which may persuasively demonstrate its aggressive or benign intentions.[19] Thus, benign or cautious behavior in a crisis and a willingness to make concessions to avoid war may signal benign intentions on the rival's part.

The main influence of the degree of threat variable is on the choice between offensive and defensive security strategies. A high level of external threats encourages offensive policies in order to cope with these threats. There is a greater willingness on the part of the elites and public opinion to endure sacrifices and bear heavy costs in the face of such high threats. The international environment is seen as dangerous, and thus it seems appropriate and sensible to act in aggressive ways to cope with it. In contrast, when the international environment is benign, a greater weight is given to defensive strategies. These are seen as the most appropriate ways to cope with the relatively peaceful external system. The main danger in such a situation is seen as stemming from the unintended escalation of conflicts rather than from the aggressive intentions of powerful enemies. As a result, the

[18] This factor combines two of Walt's material sources of threat: offensive military capabilities and geographical proximity. See Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 24–25.

[19] On the effects of major formative events, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 239–82.

focus is on preventing such escalation by defensive behavior rather than on prevailing over an aggressor by an offensive strategy.

There might be some variations in the level of threat among different regions under the same international system, depending, first and foremost, on the degree of proximity of the region to the most powerful opponent(s): the level of threat will be higher in regions that are proximate to the powerful opponent than in regions that are remote from it.

Thus, the various combinations of these two systemic variables affect the relative dominance of each of the four competing approaches to security, as follows:

1. *A system of great power parity laden with external threats increases the likelihood that the great powers will pursue an offensive realist grand strategy.*

Facing other powerful states that limit their freedom of action, the great powers are compelled to resort to realist strategies. The threatening nature of the system provides incentives to pursue offensive strategies in order to cope with the high threats. An empirical example is the U.S. grand strategy at the height of the Cold War. Thus, while at the end of the Second World War President Franklin Roosevelt aimed to pursue a defensive liberal strategy (as demonstrated in his idea of the multilateral "Four Policemen" concert of great powers),[20] the United States had to change its initial post-war inclination due to systemic pressures, irrespective of the worldview of the person in the White House. Thus, facing a powerful Soviet Union with major offensive capabilities in Europe and perceived aggressive intentions demonstrated in a range of international crises in 1946–1950, namely, a highly threatening environment, the United States in the late 1940s and the l950s adopted an offensive realist grand strategy. As Dueck suggests, this strategy "was not a strategy of balance, but of preponderance."[21] Layne similarly argues that "when World War II ended, the Soviet Union was the only obstacle to U.S. global hegemony, and in the first postwar decade Washington's principal grand strategic goal was to secure that hegemony by removing the Soviet Union as a peer competitor."[22] Thus, in the early 1950s the United States

[20] See Deborah Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 71–76.

[21] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 93;. see also 192n32.

[22] See Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, 51; see also Christopher Layne, "The 'Poster Child for Offensive Realism': America as a Global Hegemon," *Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (2002/03): 120–64, esp. 134. For other sources that interpret U.S. Cold War policy in accordance with offensive realism as defined here, see Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 15–19; Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; and Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," in *American Hegemony: Preventive War, Iraq and Imposing Democracy*, ed. D. J. Caraley (New York: The Academy of Political Science, 2004), 8, citations in n20.

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embarked on a massive program of military buildup and adopted the doctrine of Massive Retaliation. As one historian defines it, "in what was technically peacetime," the United States "embarked on military preparations comparable to those undertaken during the Second World War."[23] Still, due to the Soviet countervailing power the United States was unable to pursue an offensive liberal strategy of "rollback" (that is, regime change in Eastern Europe), even if there was some domestic ideological support for this policy and had to be content with the offensive realist approach of surpassing Soviet capabilities.

2. A combination of great power balance with a benign environment encourages defensive realist strategies.

A situation of great power parity encourages the powers to adopt realist strategies to cope with one another. The benign nature of the international environment encourages defensive measures and a search for ways and means to prevent the eruption of costly and dangerous arms races and inadvertent wars. An empirical example is U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in the détente period. Following the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the Soviet Union demonstrated cautious behavior and a willingness to avoid war, the United States was faced with a more benign environment, in which both superpowers shared a common fear of inadvertent escalation. In other words, while one of the necessary conditions for a high-threat environment (Soviet capacity to inflict heavy damage on the United States) was present, the other necessary condition—aggressive behavior by the opponent—was missing, or at least declining, and thus, as noted above, the system could be defined as relatively benign. In response, the United States adopted a defensive realist grand strategy composed of deterrence (the mutually assured destruction (MAD) doctrine) and arms control with the Soviet Union, designed to avert inadvertent escalation and an expensive and destabilizing arms race.[24] Thus, both superpowers responded similarly to the shared threat of an inadvertent escalation by following the defensive realist strategy of mutual deterrence and arms control.

Still, taking advantage of its growing power-projection capabilities in the late 1970s, including a blue-water navy, the Soviet Union once again

[23] P. M. H. Bell, *The World Since 1945: An International History* (London: Arnold, 2001), 105,113; see also Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 69.

[24] On the U.S. détente strategy, see Raymond Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1985); Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); and Benjamin Miller, *When Opponents Cooperate: Great Power Conflict and Collaboration in World Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), chaps. 4 and 6.

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became more expansionist outside its traditional sphere of influence (culminating with its l979 invasion of Afghanistan, which resulted in a major crisis with the United States). Thus, the international environment facing the United States once again became less benign, and in response the Carter administration, despite its initial defensive liberal inclinations, reverted to a more offensive realist strategy that continued in the early 1980s under the first Reagan administration. As the Soviet Union adopted a more moderate posture under Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-l980s, and the global arena once again became more benign as a result, the second Reagan administration (again, despite its initial hard-line preferences) shifted from an offensive realist strategy to a defensive realist policy of arms control with the Soviet Union.

3. *In a hegemonic system in which a global hegemon faces low external threats, it will tend to select a defensive ideological strategy. Thus, when the hegemon is liberal, it will tend to follow a defensive liberal strategy.*

The material systemic variables, specifically an overwhelming preponderance in all components of material capabilities, give the liberal hegemon leeway to promote its liberal agenda—a strategy that would be self-defeating (if not suicidal) for a great power to pursue in the less permissive, international environment of great power parity. The benign environment encourages defensive liberalism, which seems under these conditions to be a suitable strategy—that is, the peaceful and multilateral promotion of liberal-democratic regimes, free trade, and international institutions.

4. *A combination of a global hegemon with a high-threat environment encourages an offensive ideological strategy on the hegemon's part. Thus, when the global hegemon is liberal, it will tend to follow an offensive liberal strategy.*

A liberal hegemon that faces a hostile and violent international environment will tend to adopt an offensive liberal strategy, namely use its superior capabilities to find a fundamental solution to its security problems by transforming the ideological character of its opponents through regime change, if necessary by force. The threatening environment will help mobilize domestic support for such an offensive strategy, with its attendant costs and sacrifices.

Thus, in regions where the United States was hegemonic, and where there was also a major proximate security threat (notably in Western Europe in the early Cold War), the United States did promote liberal ideology, including by the use of force, culminating with imposing democracy on West Germany when it was under U.S. occupation in the years following the end of the Second World War. The same policy was applied toward Japan in East Asia. However, in regions in which the United States was the hegemon, but

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where there was no major proximate security threat, like Latin America, no major attempt at democratization was made.

Testing all four hypotheses empirically is beyond the scope of an article. In the following sections I will examine the last two propositions in the post-1991 period.

AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE MODEL IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The 1991–2001 Decade: The Emergence of Defensive Liberalism

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a unipolar or hegemonic world has emerged since the early l990s, due to the U.S. dominance in overall power resources, especially in the military sphere, including a unique global power-projection capability.[25] Which grand strategy did the United States adopt as the new global hegemon in the 1990s, and why and to what extent does it accord with the expectations of the model?

The Rise of Defensive Liberalism

The strategy adopted by the United States in the first post-Cold War decade largely accords with defensive liberalism as described above. Both the George H. W. Bush and the Bill Clinton administrations showed a commitment to a liberal agenda. Thus, in January 1993, just before the end of his term in office, George H. W. Bush outlined a defensive liberal doctrine in which "in the wake of the cold war, in a world where we are the only superpower," the United States "act[ing] in concert" with other powers and with international sanction should take the lead in promoting "less than vital interests" and a "democratic peace."[26] As Bruce Russett describes it, "by 1992 . . . both Bush [the elder] and [Secretary of State] Baker . . . accepted the

[25] On the emergence of a unipolar world in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, see Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990/91): 23–33; Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment Revisited," *National Interest* 70 (2002/03): 5–17, and esp. William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999): 5–41. Key indicators for U.S. military and economic hegemony are cited in Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 125–26; see also Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*; and Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August 2002). For a more refined argument about American leadership in the l990s, see Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*. For the debate about the endurance of a unipolar world, see Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 44–79; John G. Ikenberry, ed. *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); T. V. Paul, Michel Fortmann, and James Wirtz, ed., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); and Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 7–41.

[26] Stephen Burgess, "Operation Restore Hope: Somalia and the Frontiers of the New World Order," in *From Cold War to New World Order: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush*, eds., Meena Bose and Rosanna Perotti (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 259–73, esp. 266–67.

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principle of democratic peace—and explicitly discarded the principle that power relationships alone matter, or even matter most . . . A very unrealist position."[27] The Clinton administration, for its part, inspired by the democratic peace theory, adopted the doctrine of "enlargement," designed to enlarge the world's "community of market democracies."[28] Clinton explicitly asserted that this strategy serves U.S. interests because "democracies rarely wage war on one another."[29] In addition, the Clinton administration also sought to promote free trade and economic interdependence, as manifested in its engagement policy with China.[30]

The newfound U.S. commitment to liberal values in the 1991–2001 decade was not limited only to rhetoric. It was manifested most of all in the repeated U.S. willingness to undertake humanitarian interventions, primarily in Somalia in 1992–93 (which was started by George H. W. Bush) and in the Balkans—Bosnia (1995) and Kosovo (1999). These interventions were undertaken in response to human rights disasters and atrocities—mass starvation in Somalia and ethnic warfare in the Balkans.[31] The main motive for the American intervention in Somalia, an area seen by the George H. W. Bush administration as having, at best, a marginal importance to U.S. material interests, was clearly humanitarian—the intervention being described by one researcher as "an act of 'idealism."'[32] The military interventions in the Balkans similarly took place despite the region's limited strategic and economic value to the United States. Both the first Bush and the Clinton administrations had a shared view of low intrinsic U.S. interests in the former Yugoslavia.[33]

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[27] Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 128–29.

[28] Then National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, cited in Joanne Gowa, "Democratic States and International Disputes," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 511–22, 511n1.

[29] President Bill Clinton cited in Joanne Gowa, "Democratic States and International Disputes," 511n2.

[30] On this policy, see Alastair Johnston and Robert Ross, ed., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[31] On these humanitarian interventions, see Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 112–42; Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); and Lawrence Freedman, "Iraq, Liberal Wars and Illiberal Containment," *Survival* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 51–65, esp. 51. On Somalia see also Burgess, "Operation Restore Hope," 266, and Robert DiPrazio, *Armed Humanitarians: U.S Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 44–47. The first Gulf War of 1990–91 is not considered here as a primarily humanitarian intervention, because the United States had major material interests in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, in addition to the humanitarian motive of liberating Kuwait. The first Gulf War fits the mainly defensive realist era in which it occurred—it took place before the Soviet disintegration and the transition to unipolarity at the end of 1991.

[32] Burgess, "Operation Restore Hope," 259; see also DiPrazio, *Armed Humanitarians*, 52–60 for a refutation of alternative explanations of this intervention (such as the "*CNN* effect").

[33] See Dusko Doder, "Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds," *Foreign Policy* 91 (Summer 1993): 3–23, esp. 4; and Richard Ullman, *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996). The statement "we don't have a dog in this fight" is attributed to George H. W. Bush's secretary of state James Baker. See, for example, Steven Weisman, "In Kosovo, Another Setback for the Multiethnic Ideal," *International Herald Tribune*, 18 June 1999, 8.

Despite the absence of compelling realpolitik interests, however, the United States eventually implemented a limited intervention in Bosnia in 1995 and in Kosovo in 1999, based on the humanitarian considerations of putting an end to ethnic cleansing.[34]

It should be noted that while liberal in nature, the U.S. strategy in the first post-Cold War decade was defensive rather than offensive. Its defensive character was manifested, first, in a strong U.S. emphasis on multilateralism. Namely, in its resort to force in the 1991–2001 decade the United States consistently acted in a multilateral framework and with international approval: UN authorization in the 1990–91 Gulf War, in Somalia, and in Bosnia, and NATO approval in Kosovo (since UN Security Council authorization was unavailable due to Russian and Chinese opposition). The United States adhered to multilateralism even though collaboration with other powers was unnecessary for these interventions, from a purely military point of view (and may even have been counterproductive).

In addition, in its military interventions, the United States pursued limited humanitarian goals of putting an end to atrocities and gross violations of human rights and refrained from any ideological crusades for regime change and democratization. The United States also maintained friendly relations with autocratic Arab regimes, while overlooking their lack of democratization. Thus, following its victory in the first Gulf War of 1990–91, the United States did not pursue regime change or promote democratization in either Iraq or Kuwait. At the end of the war, the United States stopped at the international border and did not invade Iraq. Moreover, even when it had the chance to carry out democratization in liberated Kuwait, the United States did not take it, and instead preferred to adhere to the traditional norms of sovereignty and noninterference in other states' domestic affairs. Thus, it presided over the restoration of the Sabah family to power in Kuwait without insisting on any major domestic reforms such as granting voting rights to women, let alone full-blown democratization. Even when a regime change toward democratization occurred as a result of the U.S. use of force, as in Serbia in 2000, it was as a by-product of an intervention undertaken for humanitarian, that is, limited and defensive liberal reasons, rather than offensive liberal ones.

Explaining the Rise of Defensive Liberalism in the 1991–2001 Era

The rise of defensive liberalism in U.S. grand strategy in the 1990s can be accounted for by the combined effects of the changes that took place in the aftermath of the Cold War in both systemic parameters highlighted by the model: the balance of capabilities and the balance of threat. The rise

[34] See Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention"; and Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention*.

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of liberalism at the expense of realism was the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had posed the major constraint on U.S. overseas intervention and resort to force during the Cold War. In the absence of the former constraints posed by Soviet power, the unconstrained hegemon could afford to pursue a liberal agenda in accordance with its ideological/cultural preferences, as the costs of pursuing such an agenda declined sharply with the disappearance of the Soviet countervailing force. According to Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, "as growing American power enabled a more robust emphasis on values, so the liberal Wilsonian strain came to prominence."[35] The Balkans are a good example of a region where the United States could use force much more freely in the post-Soviet era than during the Cold War.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that the shift from realism to liberalism in U.S. grand strategy was not the result of a change from a realist to a liberal administration. While the Clinton administration was indeed liberal in its ideological preferences, the shift to a liberal strategy began already under the George H. W. Bush administration that was initially realist-oriented. Once the United States became a global hegemon and gained an unprecedented freedom of action, however, even such an administration began thinking in defensive liberal terms. Thus, as noted, it was the elder Bush's administration that initiated the military intervention in Somalia in 1992. Behavior that is contrary to previous foreign policy preferences testifies to the importance of systemic factors that compel the decision makers to change their initial inclinations.

At the same time, the other key systemic development was the decline of the major threat to the United States—that is, the Soviet Union—which had brought about the massive American global engagement in different regions during the Cold War. With the collapse of Soviet power and the absence of any major power both willing and able to threaten the United States, the international system became very benign for U.S. security. On the one hand, the dramatic decline in the level of external threat allowed the United States the luxury to advance its liberal preferences, but on the other hand, with the disappearance of the main threat to its security, the United States did not have a strong enough incentive to do so—at least with regard to the use of force. The offensive liberal approach, which calls for a major resort to force to promote regime change and democratization, could not have much of an appeal under these benign circumstances. Thus, the non-threatening character of the international environment gave rise to a defensive rather than an offensive liberal strategy.

As a result, despite its apparent commitment to humanitarian intervention, in practice the United States was quite cautious and hesitant with regard to the resort to force in the 1991–2001 period. While the disappearance of

[35] See Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 160.

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the Soviet countervailing force has made U.S. military intervention in the Balkans much more feasible and less costly than during the Cold War, the United States intervened both in Bosnia and in Kosovo only after considerable hesitation. Thus, the intervention in Bosnia took place more than three years after the outbreak of the ethnic violence and the humanitarian crisis there. In addition, the United States exhibited a minimal willingness to incur casualties, manifested in avoiding combat ground operations, limiting its interventions to air power, and even refraining from the use of helicopters, an effective weapon in this kind of low-intensity warfare.[36]

The unwillingness to sacrifice for the sake of humanitarian considerations was also manifested in the hasty U.S. disengagement from Somalia, following the loss of only eighteen U.S. servicemen, killed in Mogadishu in October 1993.[37] It also resulted in a very selective commitment to pursue humanitarian intervention—notably the non-intervention in Rwanda, where the greatest humanitarian catastrophe in the post-Cold War era took place.[38]

To sum up, as the model leads to expect, the combination of U.S. power preponderance and a low-threat environment in the l990s gave rise to a defensive liberal strategy, manifested primarily in the multilateral, cautious, and qualified U.S. approach to humanitarian intervention.

THE POST-9/11 PERIOD: THE EMERGENCE OF OFFENSIVE LIBERALISM

While in the 1990s the United States acted largely in accordance with defensive liberalism, in the aftermath of 9/11 major changes once again took place in its grand strategy, which again raises the question what security approach the United States adopted and why.

The Rise of Offensive Liberalism

Three main changes took place in the U.S. approach to security after 9/11. I will show that their combined effect was to bring U.S. grand strategy in line with the offensive liberal perspective as described above. This grand strategy has been applied most fully in the case of the 2003 Iraq War.[39] Even though it is a single case, the Iraq War became the key issue for U.S. foreign

[36] See Wesley Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

[37] Karin Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force: US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 72–74; and Burgess, "Operation Restore Hope," 268.

[38] See DiPrazio, *Armed Humanitarians*, chap. 4.

[39] The 2001–2002 war in Afghanistan did not exhibit the full scope of the change in U.S. strategy, because it could still be interpreted as a defensive war against an enemy who attacked the United States first, and also because the United States enjoyed broad multilateral support for the war. Thus, it did not expose the offensive-unilateral character of the emerging post-9/11 U.S. grand strategy.

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and security policy in this decade with major international, regional, and domestic implications. Thus, its importance for U.S. grand strategy goes much beyond a single case.

From Multilateralism to Hegemonic Unilateralism

In the domain of diplomacy, the United States switched from its previous defensive liberal tendency to act in multilateral coalitions and with international approval to a much greater reliance on unilateral hegemonic behavior. According to the new strategy, the United States should not compromise its national security and the life of its citizens by accepting multilateral obligations and committing itself to submit to the decisions of international institutions that might constrain its freedom of action, especially when 9/11 dramatically demonstrated that security dangers to the United States are acute. Rather, when international institutions put unnecessary obstacles in its path that prevent it from taking care of its security needs, the United States should use the opportunities provided by its global superiority, be ready to act unilaterally, or to lead informal ad hoc "coalitions of the willing" (that is, states that are willing to follow the U.S. lead)—especially as according to this approach, due to its superior liberal-moral character, its actions will also contribute to international freedom and peace.[40]

The Iraq War was the major manifestation of the shift to a unilateral approach in U.S. grand strategy. It is true that the Bush administration tried multilateralism first by approaching the UN Security Council to convince it to enforce the numerous Security Council resolutions on Iraq passed over the preceding twelve years. Yet, the administration was committed from the outset of the Iraq crisis to go to war with or without endorsement by the UN and by its major allies.[41] Indeed, the prewar debate over Iraq demonstrated the new U.S. willingness to ignore the UN Security Council, the Europeans, the Russians, and the Chinese when its perceived key security interests are at stake.

It may be argued that the difference between George W. Bush on the one hand, and George H. W. Bush and Clinton on the other, with regard to multilateralism—(defined as UNSC blessing) is overstated. After all, the elder Bush was determined to liberate Kuwait, UNSC or no UNSC. Clinton would have liked to have UNSC blessing for the U.S. intervention in Kosovo, but knew he was not going to get it, and thus did not ask. They were supposedly as willing to forego multilateralism and to act unilaterally as George W. Bush

[40] See Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," 147.

[41] See Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 155; Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 136; and Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 71.

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in Iraq. My response is based on the above definition of multilateralism as the extent of institutional constraints on the freedom of action of the most powerful member of the coalition. Thus, the multilateral coalition built by the elder Bush in the Gulf War did constrain the United States from going to Baghdad after its overwhelming military victory in l991.[42] Especially notable was the opposition of two key coalition members: Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who strongly opposed regime change in Iraq with its potential destabilizing effects on their regional security environment.

In the case of Kosovo, Clinton did indeed bypass the UNSC due to the expected opposition of two permanent members—Russia and China. But on the other hand, he did subordinate the United States to the institutional constraints of NATO during the Kosovo intervention. As a result, "decisions on everything from timing to targets were harder to make through an alliance than if the United States had been operating alone, because consensus needed to be reached among nineteen allies." Even though the United States dominated all the military operations, "each decision required painstaking negotiation . . . that cost . . . somewhat in terms of military efficacy." Allies were able to impose limits on U.S. freedom of action by, for example, vetoing bombing targets in Serbia preferred by the U.S. military leadership. Thus, for many U.S. military leaders the lessons of Kosovo were to avoid multilateral military actions in the future because of the costs and the constraints due to the necessity of seeking consensus with allies during such sensitive operations.[43]

From a Defensive to an Offensive-Preventive Strategy with Regard to the Use of Force

In the strategic-military field a shift occurred from a defensive strategy based on retaliation, deterrence, and use of force proportional to the threat, to an offensive approach in the form of preventive war. In the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy (the "Bush Doctrine") this policy was called "preemption," a term that refers to a strike to preempt an imminent attack by the adversary. Yet, in fact it is a preventive strategy, as the focus is on a resort to war against rogue states that do not necessarily threaten the United States at present, but might pose a threat a few years down the road if they are not stopped. As Bush himself defined it in a letter accompanying the National Security

[42] Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 13–16.

[43] Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, 222–25. See also Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2000), 221.

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Strategy (NSS), the United States must act "against . . . emerging threats before they are fully formed."[44]

From Peaceful Democracy Promotion to Forcible Regime Change and Imposed Democratization

The post-9/11 U.S. grand strategy is liberal in its strong belief that a state's domestic regime is the source of its international behavior,[45] and therefore the nature of other states' regimes is important both to U.S. national security and to global security. Yet, in contrast to the 1990s, when the United States was content to coexist with illiberal regimes and promote democracy by peaceful means as a long-term goal, following 9/11 it adopted an offensive liberal approach, at least in extreme cases of anti-U.S. rogue states, which constitute a threat to its national security by sponsoring terrorism, developing weapons of mass destruction, or both. In such cases the offensive liberal approach calls on the United States to change the tyrannical regimes in these states by the use of force and install democratic (and therefore more peaceful) regimes. Forcibly removing dangerous despotic regimes is a much more ambitious undertaking than the limited humanitarian interventions that the United States pursued in the defensive liberal l990s.

Thus, the 2002 NSS commits the United States to "champion the cause of human dignity and oppose those who resist it" by creating "a balance of power that favors human freedom." According to this approach, democratization is feasible everywhere because, as the Bush Doctrine suggests, "no people on earth yearn to be oppressed, aspire to servitude, or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police."[46] As Bush argues, "values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society."[47] Offensive liberals believe that once a people is liberated from tyranny, it will automatically and universally endorse democracy irrespective of regional, religious,

[44] See Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," 7. On the distinction between preemptive and preventive wars, see Miller, *When Opponents Cooperate*, 27–32. On the Bush Doctrine, see George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: National Security Council, 2002); and George W. Bush, *Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy*, 1 June 2002. Both are also available online at http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/doctrine.htm, and at http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/westpoint.htm respectively, accessed on 4 November 2009. See also Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*; Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine"; Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*; Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine"; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 158–59; and Mel Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade: The Bush Doctrine in US Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006), chap. 2.

[45] According to Jervis, the Bush doctrine shows that "Bush and his colleagues are liberal in their beliefs about the sources of foreign policy." See Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," 5.

[46] Lawrence Kaplan and William Kristol, *The War Over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission* (New York: Encounter Books, 2003), 104.

[47] Cited in Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," 145.

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national, or cultural variations, because liberty is what people everywhere aspire to achieve.

Still, in practice this approach has focused mostly on the Middle East, as a region particularly dangerous to U.S. national security—the region where the 9/11 terrorists came from and where their radical Islamic anti-U.S. ideology developed. Accordingly, the strategy of regime change was manifested most clearly in Iraq (even though it was applied first in Afghanistan). As a result, the objectives of the 2003 Iraq War were much more ambitious and far-reaching than in the first Gulf War. In 1990–91 the United States was a status quo power, restoring the status quo ante that was violated by a revisionist Iraq. This time, in accordance with the offensive liberal rationale, the United States was the revisionist power that aimed to transform the Iraqi regime and potentially other regimes in the region. The objective of the Iraq War was not only to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring weapons of mass destruction or handing them to Osama Bin Laden (an unlikely option in the first place), but, more fundamentally, to remove his regime from power in order to install a more democratic one, and thus to spread democracy into the heart of the Islamic world. Bush argued in 2002 that "liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause and a great strategic goal."[48] He also said that "stable and free nations do no breed the ideologies of murder. They encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life."[49] Thus, according to Bush, the United States has "a responsibility to promote freedom that is as solemn as the responsibility to protect the American people, because the two go hand-in-hand."[50]

Offensive liberals expect that through "domino" or bandwagoning dynamics, enforced regime change (such as in Iraq) will promote democratization in general, or at least in the neighboring countries**.** Such an undertaking, if successful, will strengthen the U.S. reputation for resolve in opposing tyranny and will lead to an imbalance of power in favor of liberal change. Successful regime change and democratization will show that dictators are not an inevitable feature of life and are not invulnerable, and that democracy is preferable to tyranny, and thus will inspire and encourage other peoples in the region to topple their own dictators and establish democratic regimes.[51]

According to offensive liberals, such a change in the Middle East in the direction of democratization would not only be beneficial for the cause of human freedom, but would also provide the most fundamental resolution of the terrorism problem, because terrorism and dictators are seen as two

[48] Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 95.

[49] Cited in Thomas Powers, "Tomorrow the World," *The New York Review of Books*, 11 March 2004, 4–6 (a book review of David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (Random House, 2004)).

[50] Cited in Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 89.

[51] See Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," 6–7; and Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," 149–51.

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sides of the same coin. Tyranny creates discontent, and the lack of avenues of political expression in despotic Middle Eastern regimes breeds extreme anti-western Islamic ideologies with a penchant for violence. In addition, anti-U.S. dictators such as Saddam Hussein may also cooperate directly with terrorists. As then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice defined it in 2002, tyrants and terrorism "are different faces of the same evil. Terrorists need a place to plot, train and organize. Tyrants allied with terrorists can greatly extend the reach of their deadly mischief. Terrorists allied with tyrants can acquire technologies allowing them to murder on an ever larger scale. Each threat magnifies the dangers of the other. And the only path to safety is to effectively confront both terrorists and tyrants."[52]

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EXPLAINING THE RISE OF OFFENSIVE LIBERALISM IN THE POST-9/11 ERA

Bush's Foreign Policy Before 9/11

For our purposes, it is significant that Bush did not come to power with a preconceived offensive liberal agenda or with any enthusiasm for democracy promotion, and neither did his closest advisors and the top members of his cabinet. According to the proposed model, when an administration comes to power, it is initially influenced by the beliefs of the key players. However, changing systemic conditions may compel it to accept new ideas and to change its grand strategy. Indeed, in contrast to Clinton's defensive liberal approach, both during the 2000 election campaign and in his first eight months in office, Bush's initial foreign policy approach could be described as tending toward defensive realism, with some offensive realist (unilateralist) elements.[53] This approach was more influenced by the worldviews of his administration's key decision makers than by the systemic factors, which should have led at that stage to a defensive liberal strategy. Thus, in an article published before the 2000 elections, Rice (then a close confidant of Bush and his chief foreign policy mentor) outlined a generally defensive realist line for the new administration, focusing on strengthening the U.S. military and on great-power politics—that is, managing U.S. relations and competition with other great powers such as China and Russia. Rogue regimes, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism are listed last on its list of priorities. Moreover, Rice explicitly attacked "the echoes of Wilsonian thought" in

[52] See "Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses the President's National Security Strategy," Waldorf Astoria Hotel, 1 October 2002, accessed at http://z22.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html, 2 March 2009.

[53] The unilateralist tendencies of the new Bush administration were manifested in the U.S. withdrawal from several major international agreements before 9/11. For useful overviews of Bush's early foreign policy, see Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 121–35; Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 61–76; and Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 148–52.

the Clinton administration and expressed a strenuous objection to humanitarian interventions.[54] Bush himself explicitly and repeatedly objected during the election campaign to the use of the U.S. military in open-ended nation-building missions, a characteristic of the Clinton administration. Indeed, the new Bush administration seemed to replace the defensive liberal strategy of humanitarian interventions with a more "humble" defensive realist approach to intervention in others' domestic affairs.[55]

In addition to Rice, the other key members of the new Bush administration, notably Vice President Richard Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Colin Powell, were also far from supporting offensive liberal doctrines such as forcible regime change and democratization prior to 9/11.[56] Thus, during the 2000 election campaign Cheney expressed his support of the Clinton administration's containment policy toward Iraq and argued that the United States should not act as though "we were an imperialist power, willy-nilly moving into capitals in that part of the world, taking down governments."[57]

While several prominent offensive liberals were appointed to senior positions in the Bush administration (in the Vice President's office, the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and the Defense Policy Board),[58] the key members of the administration—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, and Rice—could be described as "traditional hard line conservatives far more interested in using American military power to defeat threats to U.S. security than to remake the world in America's image" and "deeply skeptical of nation-building, especially when it involved the U.S. military, and scornful that American power could create what others were unable to build for themselves"[59]—that is, realists rather than liberals. The highest-ranking person in the new Bush administration who had held offensive liberal views (including support for forcible regime change in Iraq) long before 9/11 was Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, but given the realist views of all the other top

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[54] Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 45–62, esp. 45–47, 49, 53–55.

[55] See Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 63, 68, 69; Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 133–35; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 148–52; and Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 14.

[56] For Colin Powell's staunch defensive realist positions, see Michael Hirsh, *At War with Ourselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 37–38. While Rice was also a defensive realist at this time, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld tended to more hawkish offensive realist views.

[57] See Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 25. For Cheney's opposition to the invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein at the end of the First Gulf War in 1991, see Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 6.

[58] See Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2, 142–43; Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 113–21; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 34.

[59] See Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 14–15, 46.

members of the administration, he was unable to shape U.S. grand strategy in an offensive liberal direction at that time.[60]

Indeed, while criticizing Clinton during the 2000 election campaign for not removing Saddam, once in power, Bush initially maintained a containment strategy vis-à-vis Iraq and did not show much interest in regime change or in any significant military action against Saddam, and neither did Rumsfeld, Cheney, Powell, or Rice.[61] Among the top administration decision makers, the "War Party" on Iraq before 9/11 consisted of Wolfowitz alone.[62] The policy option that seemed to be prevailing within the administration with regard to Iraq in summer 2001 was the one championed by Powell—"smart" sanctions, which focused on preventing Iraq from acquiring military materiel while relaxing limitations on civilian goods.[63] As Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay suggest, "Had terrorists not attacked America on September 11, Iraq would likely have remained a secondary issue in American foreign policy."[64]

To sum up, prior to 9/11 neither Bush nor his closest advisors and top cabinet members showed any inclination to offensive liberalism in general and with regard to Iraq in particular. Despite the hawkish offensive realist tendencies of such key members of his administration as Cheney and Rumsfeld, the ideas of imposed regime change were absent from their agenda. These ideas came to the fore only in the aftermath of 9/11.

The Effects of 9/11: The Rising Threat

The 9/11 attacks, in which about 2,900 Americans lost their lives, constituted the first significant attack on the continental United States since the end of the War of 1812, and the bloodiest day in U.S. history since the end of the American Civil War in 1865. This event shattered U.S. complacency and provided a traumatic demonstration that the international environment is a much more dangerous place than the U.S. government and public previously imagined. As Bush defined it in a speech a few days later, "tonight, we are a country awakened to danger."[65] The attacks of 9/11 proved that the United

[60] See Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 127–28; and Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 6–7, 15–17, 27–28.

[61] See Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 156; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 15; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 11, 13–14, 16; Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 28; and Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 70–71.

[62] See Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 127–28; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 156; and Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 27–28. Wolfowitz had the support of the other offensive liberals within the administration, particularly Cheney's chief of staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

[63] See Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 28.

[64] See Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 127.

[65] See the 9/11 Commission, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 336, 362–63. John Gaddis has similarly written that after September 11, the United States found itself living "in a suddenly more dangerous world." See John Lewis Gaddis, "Grand Strategy in the Second Term," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no.

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States is threatened by a dangerous and undeterrable enemy with offensive capabilities—Islamic terrorism in general and al Qaeda in particular—who demonstrated conclusively that it is not only willing but also capable of striking at the heart of its major cities and inflicting heavy damage to important U.S. values. Al Qaeda seemed committed to further terrorist attacks against the United States. Thus, a few months after 9/11, Cheney famously argued that it was not a matter of whether, but when, the terrorists would strike again.[66]

A particularly severe threat raised by 9/11 was that such militant Islamic terrorists might acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD).[67] This connected the threat of terrorism with the issue of anti-U.S. rogue states such as Iraq that might potentially provide the terrorists with such weapons.[68] Even if the rogues and the terrorists did not trust each other, they could conceivably form an alliance based on their common hostility toward the United States. In the case of Iraq, both Bush and Cheney became concerned that Saddam might use WMD to threaten U.S. interests in the Middle East or provide them to anti-U.S. terrorists.[69] Bush argued that this threat changed his attitude toward "Saddam Hussein's ability to create harm . . . all of his terrible features became much more threatening. Keeping Saddam in a box looked less and less feasible to me."[70]

The rising threat of terrorism and its potential connection to rogue states seemed to discredit three of the possible grand strategies—defensive and offensive realism as well as defensive liberalism—because they did not seem to offer an effective response to this type of threat. The realist strategy seemed less relevant to a non-state threat. More specifically, the focus of defensive realism on deterrence was undermined by the phenomenon of the undeterrable suicide bombers.[71] Offensive realism's notion of preventive attack could potentially deal with the rogues' WMD, but it was put into question by the suspicion that even if a rogue's WMD infrastructure is destroyed, the hostile regime will make every effort to rebuild it, including by covert means, so long as this regime itself is not removed. The defensive liberal advocacy of

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1 (January/February 2005): 2–15, cited in Steven Miller, "The Iraq Experiment and U.S. National Security," *Survival* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 17–50, at 18; and see also Steven Miller, "Terrifying Thoughts: Power, Order, and Terror After 9/11," *Global Governance* 11, no. 2 (April-June 2005): 247–71.

[66] NBC News, *MEET THE PRESS*, show transcript, 8 November 2002.

[67] See Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 166–68. Indeed, various intelligence reports and some evidence from Afghanistan were showing that al Qaeda was planning, among other things, to produce dirty nuclear bombs. See Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 45–46.

[68] Miller, "The Iraq Experiment and US National Security," 21.

[69] See Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 156.

[70] See Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 27.

[71] On Bush's view that 9/11 discredited the doctrines of deterrence and containment, see Bush, *Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise*, cited also in Andrew Flibbert, "The Road to Baghdad: Ideas and Intellectuals in Explanations of the Iraq War," *Security Studies* 15, no. 2 (April-June 2006): 310–52, at 324n42.

multilateral diplomacy to advance non-proliferation seemed misplaced with regard to regimes that are likely to cheat about their WMD programs.[72]

Still, it is doubtful that these considerations would have been sufficient on their own to bring about the war against Iraq. Here an intervening domestic-ideational variable came into play—namely, the rising influence of the neoconservative school.[73]

The Rise of the Offensive Liberal/Neoconservative Approach

As has been widely acknowledged, the post-9/11 strategy of the Bush administration was heavily influenced by the ideas of the neoconservatives. The neoconservatives are an intellectual movement that has existed since the 1960s and 1970s and has been a part of the U.S. domestic debates on foreign policy throughout the 1990s. They are an informal group or network composed primarily of prominent intellectuals, former and current officials, analysts, journalists, and pundits, who are associated with such think tanks as the American Enterprise Institute and especially the Project for the New American Century.[74] Despite its misleading name, this school in fact epitomizes the offensive liberal approach to U.S. foreign policy as defined in this article: a combination of a liberal belief in democracy and its pacifying effects with the offensive willingness to employ massive force for regime change (and a distrust of international institutions as ineffective and constraining U.S. policy). Leading neoconservatives have described themselves as "hard Wilsonians" and "liberal hawks"—that is, advocates of the use of U.S. power to enforce U.S.-style liberalism, and they have also been called by their critics "liberal imperialists."[75]

The neoconservatives have argued that "with the decline of communism, the advancement of democracy should become the touchstone of a new ideological American foreign policy," because "the more democratic the world becomes, the more likely it is to be both peaceful and friendly to America." This school exhibits a staunch belief in liberal democracy as the best form

[72] See Miller, "The Iraq Experiment and U.S. National Security," 20.

[73] For a useful ideational explanation of the Iraq War, which, however, fails to take into sufficient account the systemic/material factors that enabled the post-9/11 rise of a certain set of ideas, see Flibbert, "The Road to Baghdad."

[74] Two major studies of the neoconservatives are Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, and Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*. Another study that emphasizes their influence on post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy is Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*. Key post-9/11 neoconservative works include Kaplan and Kristol, *The War over Iraq*, and David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2004).

[75] Thus, according to Halper and Clarke, "there is a case to be made that, far from being conservative, modern neoconservatism is better understood as a phenomenon of the 'humanitarian, liberal, Wilsonian' left." "It is a new political animal born of an unlikely mating of humanitarian liberalism and brute force." See Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 18, 181; see also 74, 76–7, 160, and 180; Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 86, who calls the neoconservative strategy "a mixture of evangelical spirit and flexing of military power."

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of government that is suited to all peoples irrespective of culture or religion. As all human beings are entitled to democracy, the United States has both a right and an obligation to help them achieve it, including by the use of force.[76]

Despite these sweeping formulations, in practice the neoconservatives did not advocate a global democratic crusade by the United States in the 1990s, but rather have focused primarily on one region—the Middle East, due to its strategic importance to the United States, and especially because of two new security threats that they saw as emanating from this region—weapons of mass destruction and Islamic fundamentalist terrorism**.** Indeed, they perceived the main danger to the United States in the wake of the Cold War to be "rogue" or "backlash" states, in other words "future Iraqs—lawless, renegade states in possession of modern weapons, including those capable of mass destruction, and dedicated to the pursuit of aggressive, even terrorist, ends . . . . "[77] Apart from Iraq itself, most other "future Iraqs" also seemed to be located in the Middle East: Iran, Syria, Libya, and Algeria.

The other emerging threat was the threat of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism emanating from the region. According to the neoconservatives, these twin threats were interrelated, and both stemmed from the tyrannical nature of Middle Eastern regimes. In their view, militant anti-U.S. groups emerged in the Arab/Islamic world because of the authoritarian nature of the regimes there, which effectively silenced dissent. This lack of political space pushed the frustrated people to embrace radical ideologies and use violent means, while the regimes encouraged this tendency by following a diversionary or scapegoat strategy of diverting the peoples' attention away from the local oppressors toward the alleged external enemies of Arabism and Islam—the United States (the "Great Satan") and Israel (the "Little Satan").[78]

Accordingly, as a solution to the twin threats of terrorism and WMD in the Middle East, the neoconservatives advocated an offensive liberal strategy, focused not only on changing the capabilities of rogue regimes, namely destroying their WMD and preventing them from acquiring more, but also (and

[76] See Krauthammer quoted in Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 76, 78; and Muravchik quoted in Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 216. For an analysis of the views of Krauthammer and Muravchik, see Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, chap. 3. On the neoconservative support of global democracy promotion, see also Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1991).

[77] Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose* (United States: Council on Foreign Relations, 1992), 35. On rogue states in post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy, see also Michael Klare, *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws: America's Search for a New Foreign Policy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); and Robert Litwak, *Rogue States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Containment After the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2000).

[78] For the neoconservative analysis of the Middle East in this vein, see Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 101–3, 106. See also John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," *Foreign Policy* 133 (November-December 2002): 50–57.

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primarily) on changing their ideological character by transforming the nature of their political system—namely, enforced democratization. In their eyes, the liberalization of Arab/Muslim regimes would not only reduce their incentives to acquire WMD and the danger that they might provide these weapons to anti-U.S. terrorist organizations—but would also "drain the swamp" in which such anti-U.S. terrorists thrive. Given avenues for political expression, domestic support for radical Islamic ideologies would decline, and liberal regimes would no longer encourage them. Liberal regimes in the Middle East would not pose a security threat to the United States—a fellow democracy. Thus, a democratic transformation of the Middle East would ensure U.S. security and energy supplies. This strategy was perceived not only as necessary for U.S. security, but also as feasible, since democracy would be welcomed by the oppressed Middle Eastern peoples if only they could be helped to get rid of their oppressors.[79]

The neoconservatives called to begin the enforced democratization of the Middle East with Iraq, due to its problematic record with regard to violations of Security Council resolutions and Saddam's hostility toward the United States. Moreover, because of its relatively sophisticated and secular urban middle-class population, Iraq was seen as the ripest for democracy among the regional states. In addition, the Iraqi people had suffered much under Saddam's tyrannical regime, and consequently yearned for freedom and would welcome his overthrow. The expectation of the neoconservatives was that a successful regime change in Iraq would have bandwagoning effects on the other states in the region and would thus trigger democratization in the whole of the Middle East. Namely, a democratic regime in a prosperous and stable oil-rich Iraq would serve as a model and a beacon for other Arab and Islamic societies that would compel their governments to democratize.[80]

Thus, the neoconservatives consistently advocated a U.S. military action to overthrow Saddam Hussein for over a decade, since the 1990–91 First Gulf War (that was, in their opinion, ended prematurely—short of invading Iraq). Leading neoconservatives addressed open letters to President Clinton in 1996 and 1998 calling for Saddam's removal by U.S. force. However, despite their best efforts to persuade the Clinton administration and Congress that the enforced democratization of Iraq was central for U.S. security, the Clinton administration repeatedly rejected their recommendations and support for removing Saddam in the 1990s remained limited.[81] In the benign low-threat environment of the 1990s, the vast offensive liberal project of the democratic transformation of the Middle East beginning with Iraq had no chance of being adopted, and the neoconservatives remained on the fringes of the policy

[79] See Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 101–2, 147–48, 218, 220, 308–9.
[80] See Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 99–100; and Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 148.
[81] See Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 69; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 29.

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debate.[82] Moreover, in spite of the fact that some prominent neoconservatives were appointed to senior positions in the new Bush administration, they were also unable to influence its policy in its first eight months in office.[83] Indeed, in a 2000 publication of the Project for the New American Century, leading neoconservatives acknowledged that the U.S. government and society would be unlikely to assume the burden of the offensive liberal program "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event like a new Pearl Harbor."[84]

The traumatic attacks of 9/11 provided precisely the "new Pearl Harbor" envisaged by the neoconservatives as a prerequisite for redefining U.S. grand strategy.[85] Following 9/11, at the crucial juncture when the Bush administration was frantically searching for an appropriate new grand strategy to deal with the rising threat of Islamic terrorism, the neoconservatives were the only ones ready with a detailed program, based on their long-standing agenda with regard to Iraq and the Middle East. They were able to present it as the right response to 9/11, including an explanation of the sources of terrorism (the Middle Eastern tyrannies as a breeding ground for discontent and radical Islamic anti-U.S. ideology), as well as a solution and a program for action (forcible regime change in the Middle East, starting with Iraq, as a way to remove the root cause of terrorism and also to eliminate hostile regimes which might provide WMD to terrorists).[86] "Suddenly, the neo-conservatives' long-desired goal of regime change in Baghdad coincided with the president's political need for a powerful response."[87]

The idea of invading Iraq as an immediate response to 9/11 (forcefully advocated by Wolfowitz and other neoconservatives both within and outside the administration) was initially rejected in favor of Afghanistan.[88] However, as the initial phase of the war in Afghanistan wound down, the neoconservatives were provided with a golden opportunity to shape U.S. policy. Seen through the prism of 9/11, the long-standing neoconservative program seemed much more plausible than before. With deterrence seemingly obsolete, 9/11 provided an opening to the neoconservatives supporting an invasion of Iraq by giving greater credibility to their claims that Iraq posed

[82] See Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 102; and Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 85.

[83] As Daalder and Lindsay remark about their persuasion attempts, "for all the intellectual power behind this effort, it gained little traction in the first months of Bush's tenure," see Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 128. On the neoconservatives' frustration with the Bush administration before 9/11, see also Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 141–50, 226; Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 129–31; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 30.

[84] Cited in Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 137–38; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 30.

[85] Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 37. On the parallels between Pearl Harbor and 9/11, see also John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[86] Miller, "The Iraq Experiment and US National Security," 21.

[87] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 205; see 4, 33, 40, 113, 138–39, 144.

[88] See the 9/11 Commission, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 335–36; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 24-26; Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*,149–54**;** Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 151, 153; Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 128; and Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 156.

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far more of a danger than previously believed.[89] "After the attacks, many in the administration became more open to arguments about the need to move swiftly against Saddam's regime."[90]

This situation allowed the neoconservatives to move from the fringes of the policy debate to center stage and to gain an unprecedented access to, and influence on, the highest levels of the Bush administration. Indeed, due to the availability and the seeming plausibility of the neoconservative approach, most key members of the Bush administration (Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and, most importantly, Bush himself) became converts to it in the months after 9/11. The trauma of 9/11 seems to have effected a transformation in the views of the key officials in the Bush administration who had not been offensive liberals before.[91] Bush himself seemed to have turned virtually overnight from a humble realist into a democratic crusader.[92] As even two leading critics of the Iraq War acknowledge: "there is no evidence in the public record showing that Bush and Cheney were seriously contemplating war against Iraq before 9/11."[93] George Packer cites Robert Kagan to the same effect: "September 11 is the turning point. Not anything else. This is not what Bush was on September 10."[94]

Thus, offensive liberalism became more and more dominant within the administration over the next months, and indeed informed both Bush's "Axis of Evil" address of January 2002 and the new Bush Doctrine of September 2002—called by one neoconservative "a quintessential neoconservative document."[95] As a result, Iraq was perceived not just as a much more significant threat than previously, but also as a strategic opportunity for putting the doctrine into practice. The president became convinced by the offen-

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[89] See Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 32.

[90] See Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 128.

[91] Thus, "Dick Cheney," as Wolfowitz told *Time*, "is someone whose view of the need to get rid of Saddam Hussein was transformed by Sept. 11 . . . And, of course, the attacks had a major impact on the President." Michael Elliott and James Carney, "First Stop, Iraq," *Time*, 31 March 2003, 177. See Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 128. On the significant changes in the positions of key administration officials following 9/11, see also Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 71–75; and Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 127–39. On Cheney and Rice, see the remarks by Brent Scowcroft in Jeffrey Goldberg, "Breaking Ranks," *The New Yorker*, 31 October 2005. Powell is a notable exception among the key members of the Bush administration in not having converted to offensive liberalism.

[92] Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 38.

[93] See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 245, who criticize Richard Clarke's, *Against All Enemies* (New York: Free Press, 2004), and Ron Suskind's, *The Price of Loyalty* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004) for arguing that Bush and Cheney were bent on invading Iraq from the moment they assumed office in early 2001.

[94] See George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 38; see also ibid., 37–65 on the changes in the positions of key policy makers in the Bush administration. On the changes in Cheney's view from the l991 Gulf War to the post-9/11 era, see ibid., 42–43.

[95] Cited in Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 141; on neoconservative elements in the Bush Doctrine, see also Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 143–44.

sive liberal argument that the United States can turn Iraq into a showcase of democracy, which will then inspire other Middle Eastern states to democratize and will help undercut the roots of Islamic extremism in the region.[96] As one administration official put it at the time, "the road to the entire Middle East goes through Baghdad."[97] Bush himself stated that "a liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region, by bringing hope and progress into the lives of millions."[98] As a result, the neoconservative recommendation to make Iraq the next target of regime change was wholeheartedly accepted by the Bush administration.

In addition to influencing key members of the administration, the effects of 9/11 made it possible for the neoconservatives to mobilize congressional and domestic support for their views, which had enjoyed only a limited support before, and thus made the offensive liberal strategy politically feasible. The U.S. public was now ready to support an offensive strategy to deal with the rising threat.[99] Thus, in October 2002 the Senate authorized the U.S. use of force against Iraq, by a margin of three to one.[100] Many leading Democrats supported the intervention in Iraq, the press was generally uncritical, and the American people were strongly supportive of the war.[101]

Many observers are skeptical with regard to the sincerity of the Bush administration's commitment to democracy in Iraq. Critics noted that during the domestic and international debate preceding the Iraq War, the administration was inconsistent in its arguments and put forth a shifting rationale for the war (Iraqi WMD versus democratic liberation) to the Congress, the American people, the U.S. allies, and the UN. Some critics viewed both these motives as a smokescreen for more sinister corporate interests. I believe, however, that the Bush administration's conversion to offensive liberalism was perfectly genuine (of course, as the U.S. fiasco in Iraq shows, this does not mean that the neoconservative program itself was correct).[102]

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[96] See Thomas Carothers, "Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2003): 84–97, esp. 91–92.

[97] See Norman Friedman, *Terrorism, Afghanistan, and America's New Way of War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 246–47, 306; and Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 73.

[98] Cited in Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 157.

[99] See Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 144; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 37 and 78.

[100] See James Dobbins, "Who Lost Iraq?" *The International Herald Tribune*, 17 April 2007.

[101] Sixty-eight percent of the American public supported the war when it broke out in March 2003. See the findings of the Gallup poll and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, cited in Flilbbert, "The Road to Baghdad," 346.

[102] For comprehensive catalogues of the faulty expectations, misplanning, and failures of the U.S. pre and post-invasion efforts in Iraq until late 2005, see Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*; Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*; and Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*. For a persuasive argument that the democratization of unstable societies might aggravate conflicts rather than reduce them, at least in the initial stages of democratization, see Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005). On the destabilizing effects of democratization in ethnically divided societies, see Benjamin Miller, *States, Nations and the Great Powers: The Sources of Regional War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The sincerity of the Bush administration with regard to its offensive liberal doctrine may be shown by the fact that it was put forth in classified documents, and not only in public pronouncements, and also that it informed the actual U.S. planning (or lack of it) for the war and its aftermath. Thus, in August 2002, a top secret statement of the goals of the coming war with Iraq (signed by Bush) defined the broader war objective, after putting an end to the Iraqi threat of WMD, as liberating the Iraqis from tyranny and helping them to "build a society based on moderation, pluralism and democracy." Accordingly, the United States was to work with Iraqi opposition groups in order to demonstrate that the American attack was an act of liberation and not an invasion. The document defined the U.S. commitment to Iraq as not ending in the act of bringing down Saddam, but also including a significant postwar role in building "a pluralistic and democratic Iraq."[103]

As for the war planning, one of the puzzles of the U.S. intervention (and one of the reasons for its failure) is the deployment of a relatively small force for the occupation of Iraq, despite the opinion of top Army officers in favor of a much larger force. It seems that this decision stemmed from the offensive liberal core belief that once a people is liberated from tyranny, it will automatically endorse democracy irrespective of regional, religious, and cultural variations, because liberty is a universal aspiration. As a result, the administration expected that the U.S. troops would be welcomed as liberators by an Iraqi population joyous at their deliverance from the clutches of Saddam's regime and that resistance would be minimal. More pessimistic (and realistic) assessments of the difficulties and costs of democratization, and of the number of U.S. troops that would be necessary to police the country during the transition to democracy, were confidently brushed aside.

Similarly, one explanation for the poor U.S. postwar planning for "the day after" in Iraq is also related to the belief that once a tyrant is removed from power, democracy will spontaneously emerge, because it was only the despot who denied the people the gift of freedom. Thus, the United States expected that once Saddam was removed from power, the Iraqis would automatically endorse democracy as any other nation, and thus there was no perceived need for detailed planning by the United States. A U.S. military victory over Saddam was expected by the administration to be the equivalent of democratization.[104] Another argument that may demonstrate the sincerity

[103] See Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 72–73; and Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 154–55. In his recent book Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2007) criticizes the centrality of democracy promotion in the Bush agenda.

[104] On these points see Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 219–20, 222–24; Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 177, 188; Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 286–87; and Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," 145, 151, 154. For rosy neoconservative estimates of the ease of installing democracy in Iraq, see Kaplan and Kristol, *The War Over Iraq*, 95–99.

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of the Bush administration's commitment to democracy promotion is that the United States disbanded the Iraqi army and took pains to arrange for a constitution and for free elections in Iraq, rather than preferring the time-honored offensive realist option of installing a pro-American military dictator or strongman.[105]

As for the administration's inconsistency in advancing the democracy motive in the domestic and the international debate prior to the Iraq War, this need not imply that it was insincere in its commitment to democracy in Iraq. Rather, while regime change was a major part of the administration's program all along, it may have deliberately downplayed this motive and emphasized the WMD issue (which it grossly exaggerated) for tactical reasons—that is, in the belief that a focus on WMD (rather than the more ambitious and controversial idea of regime change) would be more effective in mobilizing support for the war both domestically and internationally.[106] Thus, Wolfowitz later admitted that the administration emphasized the WMD issue "because it was the one reason everyone could agree on."[107] Moreover, democracy promotion was a more abstract and complex argument than the security threat posed by WMD, which made it "much harder to sell to the public."[108]

To sum up, the transition in U.S. grand strategy following 9/11 was the result of a systemic change in the balance of threat. The shift in grand strategy took place only when a new systemic factor arose—a major security threat that emerged after 9/11 and was added to the superior U.S. capabilities (which have already existed since the collapse of the Soviet Union). Thus, the new grand strategy was crucially dependent on the combined effects of the two systemic parameters highlighted by the model: U.S. preponderance of power (which remained unchanged) and the rising threat of Islamic terrorism. According to the model, such a combination of liberal hegemony and a high external threat is conducive to the emergence of offensive liberalism. While the U.S. power preponderance made this strategy possible, it was the post-9/11 high-threat environment that provided the incentive for its adoption. Indeed, I have shown that the new U.S. strategy adopted after 9/11 was broadly consistent with the offensive liberal approach.

The influence of the neoconservatives on the U.S. grand strategy, while unquestionably important, was not a major independent cause for the rise

[105] For suggestions in this vein, see Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 234.

[106] For such an interpretation, see Halper and Clarke, who argue that regime change in Iraq "was clearly an important part of the neo-conservative rationale for the Iraq war" and indeed the real and decisive reason for the war, while the WMD issue was a pretext. Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 148, 155–56, 202, 206, 308–9. See also Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 3–4, 181–82; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 57, who calls the WMD issue "a false front." For the manipulation of the WMD evidence by the administration, see Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 7; and Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 3.

[107] Cited in Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 85.

[108] See Packer, *The Assassins' Gate*, 60–61.

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of offensive liberalism, but rather an intervening variable. As noted, neoconservative thinkers consistently advanced similar ideas for a decade before 9/11, but in the benign environment of the 1990s they could not find considerable domestic support for them. "It was 9/11 that provided the political context in which the thinking of the neo-conservatives could be turned into operational policy."[109] Namely, it was only in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 that domestic support for these ideas became dramatically stronger, at least initially. Only the traumatic experience of 9/11 and its effect on American society was able to provide a powerful enough incentive for the United States to pursue regime change by a massive use of force—an incentive that was manifestly lacking since the end of the Cold War. As a result, "the terrorist attacks of September 2001 brought neo-conservatives in from the cold. In the wake of that national trauma they and the belligerent mindset associated with them gained a prominence and influence that they had been striving for, mostly with only moderate success, for over thirty years."[110]

Most importantly, it was as a result of 9/11 that Bush and most key members of his administration, who had not been offensive liberals before, became converts to the neoconservative cause, and that this approach became paramount in U.S. grand strategy. Thus, it was 9/11 that changed "'humble' candidate Bush to a President whose administration policy was based on unilateral preemption and millenarian nation building."[111] Since Bush had no previous ideological predisposition to offensive liberalism, his adoption of the offensive liberal strategy was a case of a decision maker overriding his initial inclinations, accepting new ideas, and adopting a new security approach to fit an emerging external situation.

The significant changes in the opinions of Bush and other key U.S. decision makers in the aftermath of 9/11 pose a major challenge to Monten's otherwise useful model for explaining the Bush Doctrine,[112] based on the combined effects of unipolarity and "vindicationist" liberal ideology (what I call offensive liberalism). This explanation can account neither for the pre-9/11 behavior of the Bush Administration, nor for the dramatic change in strategy following 9/11. Indeed, I have shown that only when a high level of external threat was added to U.S. hegemony did the administration change its initial realist inclination to an offensive liberal strategy.

Figure 4 summarizes the application of the two causal chains proposed in the model to the post-9/11 change in U.S. grand strategy: As a result of the changing level of threat, both causal chains jointly brought about the

[109] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 230. On 9/11 as an indispensable factor in the neoconservatives' political success and the resultant change in U.S. strategy, see also Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade*, 9, 33, 37, 210.

[110] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 40.

[111] Halper and Clarke, *America Alone*, 138.

[112] Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine."

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The Causal Chains	Independent Variables	Intervening Variables	Dependent Variables
Chain I	9/11 and the rising level of threat	Changing perceptions of top Bush administration officials: adopting Offensive Liberal views	Changing grand strategy: from initial Defensive/Offensive Realist inclinations to Offensive Liberalism leading to the Iraq War
Chain II	9/11 and the rising level of threat	A changing balance of influence in the domestic battles on grand strategy: the rising influence of the Neoconservatives	Changing grand strategy: from initial Defensive/Offensive Realist inclinations to Offensive Liberalism leading to the Iraq War

FIGURE 4 The Post-9/11 Application of the Two Causal Chains.

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transition to the offensive liberal grand strategy, which produced the war in Iraq.

The mounting difficulties and costs of democratizing Iraq have reduced the U.S. appetite for additional endeavors of regime change. Even in the absence of such additional endeavors, however, the Iraq intervention and occupation is a far-reaching event in the evolution of U.S. security policy, which has already lasted well over six years and is going to take at least a bit longer even under the Barack Obama administration. Moreover, the offensive liberalism of the Bush administration was not limited to Iraq alone. According to a congressional report, "The Bush Administration has been heavily invested in promoting democracy to other countries. A theme in Secretary Rice's Transformational Diplomacy, announced in January 2006, is her plan to reform U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance activities with a key objective of promoting democracy in other countries."[113] In the Middle East, in particular, democracy promotion affected U.S. policy not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but also in Lebanon, Egypt, and, probably most importantly, in Palestine. Thus, the Bush administration insisted on holding elections in the Palestinian territories in early 2006 even though its allies in the region, particularly the Israeli government and the moderate leadership of the Palestinian Authority, opposed it because of their fear of the rise of the radical Hamas movement. Indeed, to the great surprise of the Bush administration, Hamas won, resulting in its later takeover of the Gaza Strip and growing violence toward both Israel and the moderate Palestinians. Thus, for better or worse, democracy promotion continued well beyond Iraq (and Afghanistan) as part

[113] Susan B. Epstein, et al., *Democracy Promotion: Cornerstone of U.S. Foreign Policy?* (Congressional Research Service, 2007), 18, accessed at http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34296.pdf, 2 July 09.

of the post 9/11 offensive liberal Bush Doctrine and has exercised major effects on regional security in the Middle East and beyond.

THE FALL OF OFFENSIVE LIBERALISM?

This article has argued that there are four major theoretically informed approaches to security distinguished by various combinations of objectives (affecting the rival's capabilities or ideology) and means (resort or nonresort to force and multilateral vs. unilateral behavior). While segments of all these approaches are usually present in U.S. strategic thinking, their relative influence varies over time and depends on various combinations of systemic factors related to the balance of power (the global distribution of capabilities) and the balance of threat. The proposed model was tested in two recent periods: the 1991–2001 decade, and the post-9/11 period. The rise of U.S. hegemony after the end of the Cold War led to the dominance of liberal approaches over realist ones, because the decline in international constraints with the disappearance of the Soviet power enabled the United States to promote its ideological preferences. So long as the international environment continued to be benign, as in the 1990s, the dominant liberal strategy of the United States (implemented by the George H. W. Bush and the Clinton administrations) was a defensive one. The 9/11 attacks gave an impetus to the emergence of an offensive liberal strategy, manifested by the new Bush Doctrine and its implementation in the war against Iraq. The three key components of the strategy include hegemonic unilateralism, the preventive use of force, and regime change or democratization, including by the use of force.

What can the proposed model suggest with regard to the future of offensive liberalism as a dominant U.S. grand strategy? The fall of offensive liberalism might come about as the result of a change in one of the key systemic independent variables presented here. While the U.S. power preponderance is unlikely to change in the short term, a more likely development is a decline in the degree of threat against the U.S. homeland. As we move further away from the traumatic memories of 9/11 (to the extent that no major new terrorist attack takes place against the United States, and the terrorist network seems to be in eclipse), the U.S. threat perception is likely to decline accordingly. There has already emerged a growing disassociation between the security threat to the United States (posed by al Qaeda) and the U.S. struggle to stabilize Iraq. Thus the offensive liberal Bush administration found itself vulnerable to allegations by the U.S. public that it entangled the United States in an unnecessary war that is irrelevant to the main security threat posed to the United States by global terrorism. In the absence of major new terrorist attacks, it is highly unlikely that the United States will engage in further military adventures to promote democracy in other Middle

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Eastern countries, as the neoconservatives originally envisioned.[114] Indeed, the recent election of Obama for president was partly the result of the U.S. disillusionment with the Iraq War and of the decline in the perception of external threat.

Even if offensive liberalism declines, however, democratization in the Middle East is likely to remain a focus of U.S. foreign policy. So long as the United States remains the global hegemon, it is likely to accept and act on the liberal insight that its national security depends on democratic reforms in the region. With the decline of the global terrorist threat, however, it is likely to revert to a defensive liberal strategy of promoting democracy in the region by peaceful means and multilaterally (with the Europeans, NATO, and the UN), and by advancing economic development and conflict resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Indeed, the initial inclinations of the Obama administration seem to be defensive liberal ones, in tune with the systemic factors (U.S. preponderance and a declining terrorist threat).

To sum up, the predictions deduced from the model lead us to expect that if there are no new major terrorist attacks on the United States and no new kind of external threat emerges, then Obama will follow his initial defensive liberal proclivities. However, if there is a new terrorist attack that is sufficiently dramatic, then offensive liberalism might rise again within the U.S. marketplace of foreign policy ideas, and Obama might find offensive liberalism a congenial approach for dealing with the new threats, including the promotion of democracy by the use of force—even if in a different style and with a different rhetoric than Bush.

[114] For neoconservative lists of future targets for U.S. democracy promotion after Iraq, see Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 242–46.

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