3. IDEAS AND FOREIGN POLICY: THE FUTURE OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE MIDDLE EAST

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1. Setting the Stage

The United States entered 2006 confronting a confusing series of developments in the Persian Gulf and Middle East. On the one hand, the Bush Administration's rhetorical embrace of expanding democracy in the region seemed to be bearing fruit. In Lebanon, internal demands for political change combined with international pressure helped force the withdrawal of Syria, potentially laying the groundwork for the re-emergence of democracy in that troubled country. One result of the situation in Lebanon, is that Syria is increasingly isolated internationally and under sustained and significant pressure from its neighbors to cooperate with the United Nations' investigation of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Harriri. In Egypt, candidates associated with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood won 88 seats in parliamentary elections, making the Islamist group the principal opposition group to Hosni Mubarak's National Democratic Party. The Mubarak government also faces international pressure over the jailing of political opposition leader Ayman Noor (and other opposition figures) on what seem like obviously trumped up charges. On the West Bank, the Islamist terrorist organization Hamas seized the reigns of formal political power at the ballot box using time-honored campaign practices that played to disgruntled voters who were fed up with the cronyism, corruption and incompetence of Fatah. While this development is decried by many as an unmitigated disaster (including the Bush Administration), forcing the Islamist group into the political mainstream has and will continue to generate pressure from the surrounding states on Hamas to lay down its arms and renounce violence.

In Kuwait, political succession resulting from the death of the Emir was handled cooperatively with the ruling family abiding by the constitutional framework that called for the involvement and cooperation of the Kuwaiti parliament. In Saudi Arabia, municipal elections – albeit with no participation by women – occurred in the spring of 2005 for the first time in the Kingdom's history. While these elections hardly represent a headlong rush into a grand democratic experiment, the fact that they happened at all indicates the possibility of new domestic political space opening up in the Kingdom. In Iraq, new Shiite political parties garnered most of the votes in Iraq's December 2005 elections that boasted 70 percent voter participation, setting the stage for a critical period of political negotiations that may on the one hand see the creation of a national unity government that could help end the insurgency, or alternatively, see the country split off into more or less autonomous units.

To be sure, not all these stirrings of political evolution are embraced by the Bush Administration and the foreign policy establishment, which had perhaps naively hoped that political reform and democracy would mean the embrace of secular as opposed to Islamist political ideologies. Looking at the issue of political evolution and reform in a more strategic context, however, suggests that a period of immutable political and generational transition is underway throughout the Middle East and Persian Gulf that over the long term holds forth the promise of more transparent and normative rules-based governance. This process of political transition now underway will not necessarily be smooth or nonviolent and will almost certainly involve Islamists being forced into assuming the responsibility of governance. But as regional politics inevitably transitions into to the "modern" era, the friction created by this process will manifest itself as a prolonged period of instability as the decrepit and discredited structures of the post-colonial era are replaced by something else.

The hopeful signs of arguably healthy political change and evolution in the Middle East are, it must be admitted, overshadowed by the continued specter of regional violence and instability. The continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the "call and response" cycle of radicalizing violence between the antagonists show no sign of

abating. Israel's unilateral moves toward establishing illegal borders and its drive to effectively fragment the West Bank into atomized cantonment areas only mean the underlying basis for the Palestinian grievance will go unaddressed. This means that the violence – and ripple effects around the region – will continue. Elsewhere, terrorist attacks in Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and Kuwait, continued Shiite unrest in Bahrain and the ongoing battles of the Saudi regime against al-Qaida signal that many of the countries in the region face internal challenges to their rule and governance – just how serious remains to be seen. Also tearing at the region's tattered fabric is the deadly violent spiral in Iraq, in which it has become increasingly difficult to tell who exactly is killing whom and for what reasons. Some believe that Iraq has already in fact become a "failed state". In addition to insurgent attacks against the American occupying force, Iraqis are simply killing other Iraqis in ever greater numbers and in ways that could spiral out of control into a sectarian Algerian or Lebanese-style civil war. Such an outcome could have far-reaching negative consequences in the region with the prospect of a failed state fragmented in a variety of different ways that could in turn drive centrifugal forces in several of the surrounding states, such as Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. The fragmentation of Iraq would almost certainly invite additional outside military intervention by countries like Turkey and Iran, which would want to minimize the impact that a fractured Iraq might have on their borders and populations.

Last, but not least, the three-way confrontation between the United States, Iran and Israel over Iran's refusal to honor its commitments as a Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty signatory hangs like the sword of Damocles over the region. Iran reopened its uranium enrichment facility at Natanz on January 10, 2006, had the International Atomic Energy Agency remove seals and surveillance system on other nuclear facilities in mid-February, and apparently resumed uranium enrichment activities outside international oversight[1]. It is unclear whether there is any potential settlement that would stop what looks

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[1] Alissa Rubin, *Rejecting Cooperation, Iran Asks IAEA to Remove Seals, Cameras*, «Los Angeles Times», February 7, 2006, Internet Edition.

like Iran's inexorable march to develop weapons-grade fissile material. Attempts to reach a political solution to the nuclear standoff are further complicated by: incendiary rhetoric from Iranian President Ahmadinejad calling for Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth; statements by various Israeli interlocutors that it will not allow Iran to become a nuclear weapons state; President Bush's statements that the United States would defend Israel in the event of an Iranian attack; and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's request in the spring of 2006 for $75 million in funding to promote democracy in Iran. For added emphasis, Vice President Dick Cheney told the 2006 annual gathering of Israeli lobbyists that Iran would face "meaningful consequences" if it did not curb its nuclear program. Cheney stated further that «For our part, the United States is keeping all options on the table in addressing the irresponsible conduct of the regime»[2]. Iran's response was delivered by Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's chief delegate to the IAEA, who stated that «…the United States is also susceptible to harm and pain. So if that is the path that the U.S. wishes to choose, let the ball roll»[3]. The implied use of force by the United States seems clear in these and other statements by senior Bush Administration officials. Within such a complicated political environment, it is frankly unclear whether strategic stability is operating at any level[4]. Escalation triggers and scenarios abound in the discombobulated and multidimensional coercive bargaining framework, and it is not hard to conceive of a wider regional war if the issue is not resolved through diplomacy.

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[2] Remarks as reported in Fred Barbash, *Cheney: Iran Faces "Meaningful Consequences" if It Doesn't Curb Nuclear Program*, «Washington Post», March 7, 2006, posted at 12:12 pm.

[3] George Jahn, *Iran Threatens U.S. Over Nuclear Program*, Associated Press, March 9, 2006.

[4] Analysis offered in James A. Russell, *Nuclear Strategy and the Modern Middle East*, «Middle East Policy», vol. 11., no. 3, 2004, pp. 98-117, suggests that the lack of a functioning interstate communications system limits the extent to which any coercive bargaining framework can function with any predictability.

In sum, the region is both being driven apart and forced together at the same time, much like Benjamin Barber suggested over a decade ago in his seminal work *Jihad vs. McWorld*[5]. Barber posited that societies around the world were being buffeted by internal and external forces simultaneously, creating the kind of unstable internal environments that lead to the Balkans bursting apart at the seems in a catechism of violence in the 1990s. Barber presciently warned against the «a threatened Lebanonization of national states…» and «a retribalization of large swaths of human kind by war and bloodshed…». The centrifugal forces stretching the fabric of states is/was interacting with what Barber called "McWorld," or globalization, in which societies are also being subjected to the forces of «one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce»[6]. Barber might today look at the Middle East as a laboratory for both forces.

2. Out With Old, In With the New

The discombobulated regional environment notwithstanding, it is difficult to say whether the neoconservative intellectual architects of the Bush Administration's approach to the Persian Gulf and Middle East would find these events consistent with their vision of a reconfigured regional security environment featuring the spread of democracy and the creation of a new set of political actors that could lead the region into the modern era. Given some of the previously noted hopeful signs, neoconservatives of the Bush Administration might in fact look across the region and feel justified in their decision to reorient U.S. regional security strategy away from seeking a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute and the buttressing of post World War II relationships with the Sunni-monarchies and political elites in the Levant and the Gulf. While it is too much to suggest that these twin pillars of U.S. strategy and policy have been abandoned, it is clear that these two issues no longer constitute the strategic

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[5] Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, «Atlantic Monthly», March 1992.

[6] *Ibidem.*

imperatives that drove U.S. strategy and policy throughout much of the post World War II era.

The election of George Bush in 2001 and the ascendance of his neoconservative advisers saw the United States shift its regional policy emphasis to three principal pillars: unconditional and unequivocal support for Israel, support for the spread of democracy, and prosecution of the so-called "war on terror". The Bush Administration has for all practical purposes given up trying to use U.S. power and influence to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute, giving Israel an effective blank check to unilaterally decide on its borders, the shape of Palestinian statehood, and what defines peaceful co-existence with the Palestinians. Just as important, both political parties in the United States embrace the Bush Administration's approach. In the Gulf, the decision to use force to institute a Shiite lead government in Iraq has put the Sunni-lead monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula on notice that the terms and conditions of the old partnerships are in question. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Saudi Arabia in particular has been subjected to widespread attacks across the U.S. political spectrum that create uncertainty surrounding the historic commitments made by successive administrations to Saudi territorial integrity and regime security. For its part, emerging domestic political forces in Saudi Arabia are in parallel pushing the Kingdom away from its one time security guarantor[7]. In short, uncertainty in the region reigns supreme, and U.S. strategy and policy are similarly in a state of flux, conflicted by the simultaneous commitments to promote democracy, fight terrorism, and ensure Israeli security.

3.   Framing the Future of U.S. Strategy and Policy

This paper will argue that the future of U.S. relations with the Persian Gulf and Middle East will be influenced by a variety of different

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[7] James A. Russell, *Saudi Arabia in the 21st Century: A New Security Dilemma*, «Middle East Policy», vol. 12, no. 3, 2005, pp. 64-78.

related and interactive factors. First and perhaps foremost is the ongoing search for paradigmatic and theoretical coherence in the foreign policy establishment towards the broader global environment that includes the Persian Gulf and Middle East. The United States and its foreign policy establishment are still searching for a coherent theoretical framework to describe the international system and the global security environment in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ongoing debate over this theoretical framework is manifesting itself most immediately over various arguments being advanced about America's role in the world and particularly in the Middle East – viewed by many as the most critical region in the world to U.S. interests and objectives. Related to the debate over global theoretical frameworks is a second tier debate over America's role in the world and how to use its national instruments of power to achieve its objectives. Last but not least – and related to the first two debates – is a vitriolic and bitter exchange over Middle Eastern studies in the West writ large in which questions have been raised over the ability of traditional academic area experts and theoreticians to accurately describe the region. The lack of accurate, descriptive analysis, it is argued, has gradually infused its way into misguided policy and misguided policy execution.

To make predictive statements over the course of the future anything other than pure speculation or educated guesswork, this paper loosely applies an overarching theoretical framework that draws upon the international relations theory known as constructivism. Constructivism asserts, among other things, the power of shared ideas and that people as agents of ideas matter, since their ideas become institutionalized in the form of identities, normative behavior and cultures[8]. The future of U.S. relations with the Middle East and Persian Gulf will be greatly influenced by people and their ideas and theories upon which those ideas are based. Using a constructivist framework and identifying particular epistemic communities that are competing for influence in the foreign policy process, it is possible to assert certain likely policy

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[8] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, MA, Cambridge University Press, 2000; Ted Hopf, *The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory*, «International Security», vol. 23, no. 1, 1998, pp. 171-200.

outcomes depending on which of these groups have established themselves in a position of political ascendancy in the U.S. foreign policy milieu.

The interrelated theoretical debates being conducted at these respective levels all devolve down to a single point of delivery: policy execution and formulation. A related point of this paper is to highlight the wider policy impact of ideas and the cluster of epistemic communities that have coalesced around them. The ideas being debated by these communities at what might be thought of as the strategic (international systemic), operational (national level) and tactical (Middle East regional) levels will interact to determine the future of U.S. regional policy formulation and execution. This paper argues ultimately that the shape of U.S. policy will be determined by which epistemic community or combination of epistemic communities succeed in responding to the region's structural insecurity defining U.S. regional interests and objectives and the corresponding configuration of U.S. national instruments of power and influence as they are applied in policy instruments that will have to respond to the region's structural insecurity over the coming decades.

4.   The Gulf and Middle East Remain Ascendant –
    for the United States

The ideas in these communities will inevitably collide with a reality in the Middle East shaped in large part from the region's structural insecurity that promises to become steadily more serious[9]. The Middle East's regional problems are not and will not be going away and will require some sort of sustained policy response by the United States. Stated another way, the United States will be unable to retreat from involvement in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Despite the Bush Administration's retreat from identifying access to the region's

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[9] A multi-layered look at the region's structural insecurity is contained in James A. Russell (ed.), *Critical Issues Facing the Middle East: Security, Politics and Economics,* Palgrave MacMillan 2006.

oil as a predominant U.S. interest, it is hard to identify other issues as strategically important to the United States. Even in the unlikely event that the United States somehow successfully responds to President Bush's call in his February 2006 State of the Union speech to «replace more than 75 percent of our oil imports from the Middle East by 2025», global trends in oil production and consumption indicate that the health of the world's economy will rise or fall depending on the ability of Persian Gulf producers to significantly expand oil production capacity over the next 20 years and beyond. The Department of Energy's projections indicate that global demand for oil is likely to increase from approximately 80 million barrels per day to between 119-120 million barrels per by day 2025 – a 50 percent increase. The United States – currently consuming nearly 20 million barrels per day (25 percent of the world's total) – is expected to be consuming 28 million barrels per day by 2025. Oil imports from the Gulf are expected to double over the period to over 4 million barrels per day, President Bush's statements notwithstanding. Developing Asia will need increasing amounts of Gulf oil to fuel an economic expansion projected to grow at 5.5 percent annually – the highest growth rate in the world. The low cost of oil production in the Gulf coupled with comparatively low capital investment required to increase production relative to other producers mean that the region is well positioned to double oil production over the next 20 years to meet global demand[10].

However, a host of uncertainties could prevent the Gulf producers from meeting their part of the bargain in quenching the world's insatiable thirst for oil. In a region beset by three major regional wars in the last quarter century (Iran-Iraq War, and Gulf Wars I and II), two ongoing occupations and insurgencies (West Bank and Iraq), a state seeking to acquire nuclear weapons (Iran), terrorist groups seeking to topple existing regimes and disrupt commerce through the Bab el Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz (to name only a few) there are a

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[10] Figures drawn from Energy Information Administration, *International Energy Outlook 2005*, Washington D.C., Department of Energy, July 2005, available online at http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/download.html.

host of variables that could prevent Gulf oil producers from meeting their production objectives. The February 2006 attack by suicide bombers on a Saudi oil facility sent tremors throughout global oil markets[11]. A series of successful attacks on Saudi export terminals or even in tanker traffic transiting the Strait of Hormuz would result in more than just tremors. In addition to vulnerabilities to disruption by attack, internal factors also loom large and also present obstacles to increases in oil exports.

Dramatic increases in the Gulf's oil producing capacity will require substantial increases in investment, a significant quantity of which will have to come from foreign sources. The external and internal threat environments will affect the investment climate in the region. Without a stable investment climate, the Gulf oil producers may have difficulty in generating the investment needed to build sufficient capacity to meet global demand. Current investments of the Gulf producers in their infrastructure are already lagging. Recent figures released by the International Energy Agency (IEA) indicated that Middle East and North African producers will need to double their annual investment to $23 billion for exploration and infrastructure development to keep pace with global demand[12]. The IEA projects that regional producers will need to spend a total of $614 billion over the next decade to build sufficient capacity to keep the supply-demand balance in world oil markets. The consequences of not building this capacity are clear. The IEA's chief economist, Fatih Birol, recently stated: «We may end up with much less oil from the Middle East than we demand. There is substantial risk of substantially higher oil prices if current investment in the Middle East is not stepped up substantially»[13]. Dramatically higher oil prices – estimated by some to

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[11] For more details, see Simon Henderson, *Al Qaeda Attack on Abqaiq: The Vulnerability of Saudi Oil*, Policy Watch no. 1082, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington D.C., February 28, 2006.

[12] Figures in International Energy Agency's, *World Energy Outlook*, as reported by Jad Mouawad, *Oil Producers are Urged to Invest in More Capacity*, «New York Times», November 7, 2005.

[13] As quoted in Carola Hoyos, *IEA Warns of 50% Oil Price Rise by 2030*, «Financial Times», November 2, 2005.

reach $80 per barrel in the next decade – would slow economic growth around the world. The key country in this nexus is Saudi Arabia, now possessing nearly 25 percent of the world's estimated reserves. Saudi Arabia plans to expand oil production capacity from 10 million barrels per day to 12.5 million barrels by 2009, but there no plans to expand capacity in the Kingdom beyond 15 million barrels per day – far short of the IEA's target of 18 million barrels per day by 2030[14].

As the principal "provider" in today's global market place for security, the United States must seek to prevent any of these and other potential threats from disrupting the short and longer-term functioning of world oil markets. Recent calls to reduce U.S. dependence on imported oil miss the broader point: there is no other country in the world with larger stakes in bringing oil to market in predictable and steadily increasing quantities. According to the World Bank, the United States 2004 Gross Domestic Product of $11.6 trillion accounts for about 28 percent of the world's estimated GDP of $40.8 trillion[15]. Any disruption in the global economy resulting from significant and sustained disruptions in oil supplies would hit disproportionately harder in the United States than in other countries. Moreover, significant disruptions in either the pricing and/or supply of oil that slows the projected growth in Asia will have global economic consequences that will also have serious negative consequences for the United States. In short, with the world's largest economy, the U.S. can and must exercise its influence through policy tools to help ensure that Gulf and the Middle East remain stable and functioning regions in the wider international system[16].

It is not just the immutable laws of global economics, however, that will force the United States to remain focused on the Persian Gulf and

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[14] Figures from Jad Mouawad, *op. cit.*

[15] The World Bank, Quick Reference Tables at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf

[16] Case spelled out in greater detail in Gawdat Bahgat, *US Oil Outlook*, «Middle East Economic Survey», vol. 49, no. 9, February 27, 2006.

the Middle East. The oft-cited fact that 15 out of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 came from Saudi Arabia has formed part of a broader narrative suggesting that the tentacles of terrorism stretch deeply into the Middle East and Persian Gulf – the principal threat to U.S. national security. In his oft-cited November 2003 speech calling for democracy in the Middle East, President Bush stated that:

> Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe – because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo[17].

The Bush Administration has effectively established a narrative that posits a connectivity (however flawed) between a variety of different and disparate elements – terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland and elsewhere, undemocratic and repressive regimes in the Middle East, poverty and a lack of human development, and instituting democracy in Iraq and elsewhere in the region. All these elements form part of a broader backdrop framing the case for continued involvement in the region. At a political level, this narrative provides the supporting framework both for the global war on terrorism and the Middle East democracy initiative. At the military level it provides the basis for the recent calls in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review to increase the numbers of U.S. special operations forces that can operate in counterinsurgency and post-conflict environments like that being encountered in Iraq. While it is true that successive American administrations may not sign up to elements of the narrative, it is also the case that future administrations will find it hard to significantly recast the story line in ways that would justify a significant U.S. retreat from regional affairs.

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[17] Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington D.C., November 6, 2003.

While the current U.S. involvement in the Middle East is framed in the context of the so-called war on terror, the region boasts a number of structural sources of insecurity that further promise to engulf the region in a sustained crisis that will require similarly sustained engagement from the United States and the international community.

In today's Middle East, threats to security stem from underlying structural problems that transcend the particular characteristics of certain states. The problems of authoritarian governments, Islamic extremism, structural unemployment, terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and organized crime are transnational problems and region-wide phenomena not confined to geographic units defined by states' borders.

Security in the Middle East must be viewed as a multidimensional construct that demands multi-level and interdisciplinary levels of analysis. Development of a different paradigm to consider differentiated elements of security also suggests a parallel effort to bring instruments of state power and its organizations into some kind of alignment with this new marketplace of security. In his book *The Pentagon's New Map*, Tom Barnett suggests that for the United States the global environment represents a kind of new marketplace for security. According to Barnett, the United States needs to think of using force in the context of "exporting security" along the global fault lines separating those states participating in globalization and those that are not[18]. It seems clear, for example, that the United States now lies suspended in a state of paradigmatic, institutional, and intellectual disconnect as it seeks to apply its traditional instruments of state power that are wholly unsuited to today's security environment in an approach inadequately described by the meaningless phrase "global war on terrorism"[19]. Fleshing out the sources of the disconnect is important not just for the United States but for the international community.

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[18] Thomas Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map*, New York, Berkley Books, 2004.

[19] Thomas Johnson, James A. Russell, *A Hard Day's Night: The United States and the Global War on Terrorism*, «Comparative Strategy», vol. 24, no. 2, 2005, pp. 127-151.

5. The Region's Structural Insecurity

Today's regional security environment in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf remains highly unstable, an instability that due to its intensity and duration suggests deep-rooted structural problems that go beyond the interstate disputes associated with the Arab-Israeli Wars and intra-regional rivalries that have also resulted in the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf Wars I and II. Various forces identified below have been identified by the National Intelligence Council as the environment for the "perfect storm" that will almost certainly result in pervasive future instability[20]. The security environment is only a manifestation of the region's deep systemic problems, including those that follow.

Governments and Governance
As documented by the three successive Arab Human Development Reports, the region faces a basic and overriding crisis in governance. The terms and conditions of citizenship and the development of basic elements of civic society are being addressed as the region navigates its way towards developing new societies[21]. Today, the region confronts the wreckage of the failed secular Arab nationalist movement, Arab socialism, and Pan-Arabism, as well as leftover anachronistic forms of governments essentially run as businesses by familial elites. The era of these governmental forms is drawing to a close, and it remains unclear what forms of governance will emerge to take their places. The process of transition to new governmental structures may be violent and result in region-wide instability, and the types of governments that emerge may be revolutionary in nature. While the post-colonial secular elites successfully repressed political Islam and the Islamists throughout much of the 20th century, Islamists

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[20] National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project*, Washington D.C., December 2004.

[21] For example, issues of citizenship and the relationship between the governed and the government in Saudi Arabia are addressed by Gwen Okruhlik, *The Irony of Islah (Reform)*, «Washington Quarterly», vol. 28, no. 4, 2005, pp. 153-170.

remain a powerful domestic political constituency in most Middle Eastern societies.

The era of political Islam is arriving in the Middle East, a result of generational change and the inevitable, gradual collapse of the post-colonial secular order in countries like Syria, Egypt, Libya, and Iraq. It remains unclear whether Islamists across the Diaspora will adopt the intellectual and ideological radicalism articulated by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri or some other more moderate frames[22]. Iran's discredited model of Islamic governance presents another possibility.

Other competitors for the space of governance are appearing in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, where Hamas has emerged as viable contender to the Palestinian authority's attempt to introduce some semblance of democracy to the Palestinians. In the Gulf, various of the familial elites are attempting to forestall the development of Islamism by encouraging political reforms that create circumscribed forums for more widespread political participation[23]. In Iraq, it appears that the Shiites and the clerical order headed by Ayatollah Sistani will have a chance to test their hand at heading some form of federated governance that could provide yet another model for regional governments.

While there is common intellectual and spiritual ground between the Islamists and bin Laden, it seems clear that there is not yet a broadly-based social movement embracing bin Laden's idea of a unification of the Ummah and a return to the days of the Caliphate. Characterized by some as the struggle for the soul of Islam, it is this struggle to develop a coherent political philosophy that can guide the development of different ways of governance that may be the single biggest determinant of stability and security. What makes the impending crisis of governance so important is the host of pressing problems that will

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[22] Described eloquently by Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004.

[23] Joseph Kechichian, *Democratization in the Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC*, «Middle East Policy», vol. 11, no. 4, 2004.

challenge the ability of all governments to deliver competent "governance" for all the region's populations.

Urbanized, Youthful and Unemployed Populations
Although projections depict slowing population growth, the region's population is expected to more than double by 2050 to reach 649 million individuals. Saudi Arabia and Yemen are expected to grow almost fourfold by 2050, from 24 million to 91 million, and from 19 million to 71 million, respectively. Egypt and Iran are predicted to have populations of over 100 million in 2050. Only 25 percent of the population was urban in 1960, compared with 57 percent in 2001. This rate is expected to climb to 70 percent by 2015, with about one-quarter of the population living in cities of one million or more. Regional populations are also increasingly youthful. A "youth explosion," where ages 20-24 – the key age group entering the job market and political society – has grown steadily from 10 million in 1950 to 36 million today, and will grow to at least 56 million by 2050, according to the United Nations. These youths are entering societies already shouldering profound structural unemployment, ranging between 20-30 percent in some Middle Eastern countries, which only promise to become worse as populations continue their inexorable increase.

Water
Fresh water shortages, already below World Bank minimums, will only grow more acute due to the lack of renewable freshwater sources as populations increase and present new challenges to governance. Increasing reliance on expensive desalinated water will help in the oil rich Gulf States, but is more of a problem for the non-oil rich countries such as Jordan.

Economics
Despite the region's large oil reserves, economic growth rates generally lag behind much of the developing world. The lack of global competitiveness flows from a general lack of private sector development and non-diversified economies, which is manifested by high structural unemployment throughout the region. Perhaps the region's most critical stumbling block in building competitive economies revolves around the human capital inefficiencies resulting

from the lack of women in the work force. Societies that deny women basic human rights are consequently denied access to the human capital that resides in roughly 50 percent of their populations.

"Traditional" Sources of Insecurity

Long-term sources of insecurity provide the tectonic plates of geologic strata over which the shorter-term sources of insecurity bubble and boil like hot magma in volcanic eruptions. As previously noted, short term sources of insecurity seem abundantly consistent with various theories of realism. Historic and enduring interstate rivalries and the quest of states for security still represent powerful and enduring sources of conflict. The quest for nuclear and other non conventional weapons by a variety of states must certainly appear at the top of any list of sources of insecurity.

Structural long-term sources of instability will inexorably gather momentum over the next decade and beyond. Populations will increase and will be concentrated mainly in urban areas; fresh water will become scarcer; structural unemployment and slow economic growth are unlikely to go away; and aging transportation, housing and communications infrastructures will face increasing strain due to these underlying systemic forces. These long-term forces will collide with the enduring sources of inter- and intra-state conflict, promising to create a "perfect storm" of instability and conflict.

6. Epistemic Communities and the Search for Theoretical and Intellectual Coherence

If the aforementioned descriptions paint a confusing regional mosaic that seems to defy a system-wide theoretical explanation, the inability to cast the Persian Gulf and Middle East into a coherent theoretical framework is part of the broader paradigmatic uncertainty swirling in academic and policy communities about how to properly describe the international environment in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. Lacking a coherent description has in turn made it more difficult to offer up well articulated and mutually supporting policy objectives. Labels, names, and descriptive terminology matter since they flow

from epistemological foundations that inform the intellectual and theoretical constructs providing a basis for policy formulation. President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haas, perhaps stated it best when he recently argued that «Here we are, more than 16 years after the Berlin Wall began to crumble, and this period still lacks a name. Calling it the post-Cold War era is an admission that we know what came before but not where we are, much less where we are heading»[24]. The sense of unpredictability and the resulting anxiety referenced in Haas's comments reflect a deeper uncertainty over the nature of the international system. The Middle East and the Persian Gulf represent sources of particularly intense public anxiety in the United States and much of the developed world. In March 2006, two opinion polls indicated that almost half of Americans have a negative perception of Islam and one in four of those surveyed professed "extreme" anti-Muslim views[25]. The polls followed rioting in the Middle East and Central Asia over the appearance of cartoons published by a Danish newspaper represented only the latest in a series of incidents demonstrating the unease in the relationships between religious and geographic blocs around the world.

The quest for theoretical coherence is important in another context, since it is theories and the ideas upon which those theories are based that can infuse the belief systems of those responsible for framing policy and policy execution[26]. A central assertion of this paper is that the future of U.S. relations in the Middle East and Persian Gulf will be increasingly driven by the outcomes of theoretical debates between a

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[24] Richard Haass, *This Isn't Called the [Blank] Era for Nothing*, «Washington Post», January 8, 2006, p. B04.

[25] PR Newswire, *Two New Polls Show Negative Image of Islam in U.S.*, March 9, 2006. A survey by the Council on American-Islamic Relations showed that one quarter of Americans embrace stereotypes of Muslims as valuing life less than other people and that Islam teaches violence and hatred. An ABC News Washington Post poll indicated that 46 percent of Americans have a negative perception of Islam.

[26] An analytical framework suggesting such a causal link is detailed in Judith Goldstein, Robert Keohane (eds.), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press.

variety of particular and identifiable epistemic communities. As defined by political scientist Anne Clunan, an epistemic community is:

> …a network of professionals with recognized expertise and authoritative claims to policy-relevant knowledge and in a particular issue area. These professionals may have different disciplinary and professional backgrounds and may be located in different countries, but they share a set of norms that motivate their common action, a set of causal beliefs about central problems in their area of expertise, shared criteria for evaluating knowledge and a common policy enterprise…[27]

As also emphasized by Clunan, epistemic communities serve as critical and influential information providers to policy decision makers: «Epistemic communities exercise influence by interpreting… complex problems and possible responses for decision makers within national governments and international organizations. Their influence comes in part from their claim to authoritative and consensual knowledge based on their professional expertise»[28]. Consistent with Clunan's formulation, this paper asserts that epistemic communities will exercise tremendous impact on the conduct of future U.S. relations with the Middle East. Supporting this general line of argument, strategist Colin Gray opined in 2004: «There is something to be said for the proposition that, or hope that, the circumstance brings forth the person. But, still I believe that individuals and their relationships can make history. Studies such as this, which tend to be long on strategic ideas and geopolitical concepts, are apt to fail to accord people the significance that they deserve»[29]. Arguments asserting the importance of people, ideas and identity fly in the face of

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[27] Anne Clunan, *Epistemic Community* in M. Bevir (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Governance*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2006. Also see Anne Clunan, *Constructing Concepts of Identity*, in R. Sil, E.M. Doherty (eds.), *Beyond Boundaries: Disciplines, Paradigms, and Theoretical Integration in International Studies*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2000, pp. 87-116.

[28] *Ibidem*.

[29] Colin Gray, *The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order*, Lexington, KY, University of Kentucky Press, 2004, p. 37.

mainstream international relations realist theory, which argues that interests and corresponding rational choice by individuals ultimately drive the actions of states in the world's anarchic self-help system. Consistent with Clunan's descriptive framework, an argument can be made that the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 can be directly linked to the influence and ideas of a particular epistemic community known as "neoconservatives." The neoconservative epistemic community effectively operationalized its ideas in policy resulting in the Iraq invasion and occupation. The ideas and beliefs of the neoconservatives sprang from a particular epistemology that informed a world view, beliefs about the role of the United States in the world, and, just as important, a particular view of the Middle East. The resulting intellectual framework lead to a policy in the Middle East which held that U.S. interests were best served by invading Iraq and abandoning the Middle East peace process. Upon becoming married with political power and authority, these views were operationalized in policy to devastating effect. The actions of the neoconservatives are if anything a textbook example of the impact that epistemic communities can have on U.S. policy execution in the Gulf and Middle East.

The neoconservative's achievement of political power and influence in the Bush II Administration came at the expense of the realist-oriented group of advisers that had shaped the Bush I approach to the Middle East in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Without political power, their views would have remained confined to the sound-byte talking head space populated by Washington think-tanks and cable news networks. The neoconservatives, of course, sprouted from a lively and healthy well-spring of epistemic communities competing for power and influence in the formulation and execution of foreign policy. U.S. administrations regardless of their political stripe have drawn extensively upon various realist- and liberal- oriented epistemic communities in shaping their policy approaches to the world and the Middle East. The intellectual disciples of the realist and liberal policy schools remain vibrant epistemic communities, and will continue to furnish people into the foreign policy bureaucracy. As demonstrated by the Bush Administration, however, these mainstream realist and liberal communities can be bypassed or outmaneuvered by other

groups in competition for access and policy influence. Groups that today might seem out of the mainstream relative to the realist and liberal mainstream could one day assume positions of power and authority and operationalize their own views in foreign policy as it relates to the Middle East and Persian Gulf.

7.   Newest of the Epistemic Groups: "The Globalizers"

For illustrative purposes, it is useful to review a few of the competing schools of thought that have emerged that attempt to provide an over-arching set of ideas to place the international system into a meaningful context. Perhaps the newest of these ideas is defined as "globalization," which refers to the increasing interconnectivity of the international system that features growing global flows of goods, money, data and people. Some scholars argue that globalization is fundamentally altering the international system, leading to decline in the Westphalian system of state-based governance.

Those arguing this point of view believe that states are increasingly unable to regulate growing global flows and that the international system is in the process of devolving into something described as "neomedievalism" in which territorial boundaries become more fluid and dynamic[30]. One proponent of this school of thought, Philip Cerny, argues that «…neomedievalism means we are increasingly in the presence of a plurality of overlapping, competing, and intersecting power structures – institutions, political processes, economic developments, and social transformations – above, below and cutting across states and states system. States today represent only one level of this power structure, becoming more diffuse, internally split, and enmeshed in wider complex webs of power»[31]. Cerny and others believe that the evolving international environment has created a new

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[30] For a interesting discussion of the changing nature of borders and territoriality see Peter Andreas, *Redrawing the Line: Borders and Security in the Twenty First Century*, «International Security», vol. 28, no. 2, 2003, pp. 78-111.

[31] Philip Cerny, *Terrorism and the New Security Dilemma*, «Naval War College Review», vol. 58, no. 1, 2005, p. 12.

and complex security dilemma for states, which are facing challenges to their authority from a variety of different forces unleashed by globalization[32].

A variation on this theme suggests that a systems theoretical perspective can provide another way to think about the decline in the primacy of state actors in the international environment[33]. This argument posits that "sub-system dynamics," or forces not associated with or controlled by nation states are driving the dynamics of the international environment[34]. Under this theoretical perspective, the international system is seen as the "super system," the nation state as the "system," and forces below the nation state as "subsystem". These subsystem forces include such things as ethnocentrism, religion, tribalism, sectarianism, resource scarcity and environmental factors, and population growth, to mention a few. For example, it could be argued that Samuel Huntington's case for future drivers of global conflict as enunciated in his seminal work *Clash of Civilizations*[35] is rooted in an argument positing the primacy of subsystem dynamics – or forces not associated with nation states. Virulent Islamic extremist ideology that forms the basis of the al-Qaida narrative is one example of a powerful subsystem dynamic.

To the globalizers and system theorists, there is no better indicator to buttress their claims over the decline of the nation state than the growing numbers of states that are either failing or in danger of failing. Approximately two billion people, or about 30 percent of the world's population was recently estimated to be living in insecure environments[36]. An index of failed or failing states compiled by

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[32] *Ibidem* p. 13.

[33] Background on systems theory can be found in Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory*, London, Allen Lane, 1968.

[34] Thomas H. Johnson, James A. Russell, *op. cit.*

[35] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, «Foreign Affairs», vol. 72, no. 3, 1993, pp. 28-50.

[36] *The Failed States Index*, «Foreign Policy and the Fund for Peace», July/August 2005, available online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id= 3098.

«Foreign Policy» indicates that nearly 60 states are in danger of failing – just under a third of the world's total[37]. The state rankings were based on 12 weighted indicators that measured such factors as demographic pressures, prevalence of refugees and displaced persons, presence of group grievances, urban development, economic decline, delegitimization of the state and human rights conditions. The Middle East contains a number of these troublesome cases.

Table 1
Failing States in the Middle East and Persian Gulf[38]

Critical	In Danger	Borderline
Iraq	Egypt	Iran
Yemen	Lebanon	Saudi Arabia
	Syria	Turkey

8. Rise and Fall of the Realists

It has to be admitted that the theories advanced by the globalizers and the system theorists for the most part remain outside the policy mainstream in the American national security and foreign policy establishment. The epistemic communities surrounding these ideas have not achieved political power, at least in the field of national security affairs. While the ideas of those offering up the model of globalization have been embraced in the field of economics, the realists and their essential belief in the primacy of states as arbiters of security in the anarchic international system remain ascendant.

The "realist" epistemic community came largely out of East Coast ivy-league schools (and the University of Chicago) in which Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz and others educated a variety of their disciples that later exercised profound influence on U.S. foreign policy.

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[37] *Ibidem.*

[38] *Ibidem.*

After World War II, George Kennan and his doctrine of containment cemented the realist's grip on national security strategy. Kennan believed that the Soviet Union would eventually collapse as a result of its own internal contradictions and built doctrine to achieve that objective, which featured alliances and security partnerships built on the assumption of collective defense, forward deployed U.S. forces along the periphery of the Soviet Union and, occasionally, the use of force in those situations warranted in the context of the struggle. Henry Kissinger and his protégés (including Brent Scowcroft) followed behind Kennan and worked hard to provide a framework during the 1970s that sought to manage the Soviet relationship with dialogue and arms control agreements without fundamentally disagreeing with Kennan's approach. During the Cold War, realists saw the Middle East as another of the contested spaces on the periphery of the Soviet Union, which lead to the unsuccessful attempts to create a regional collective security framework to combat and deter Soviet expansion.

While there are nuanced and important variations in the realist school, there is basic agreement over several unifying themes: 1) states remain the most important arbiter of international security and stability; 2) the international system remains a "self help" system in which states are driven to take whatever steps they think necessary to protect themselves and further their power and influence; 3) the idea of a balance of power is an important feature as states pursue relationships and alliances to maintain stability; 4) international institutions are useful as instruments to help states pursue their objectives, but not as instruments that can guarantee and preserve peace and security; 5) using these precepts, policy making under the realist framework features decision-makers using rational choice to decide on steps to protect and further the state's interests based on a calculation of the costs and benefits from particular courses of action; 6) force should be used only in those circumstances when national interests are sufficiently threatened to justify the costs; 7) realists in general have a dim view of human nature and believe that man is driven by self interest[39].

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[39] Summary of realist views drawn from John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Chicago, ILL, Chicago University Press, 1991, pp. 1-18; Charles

Within the realist school, however, there are important divisions of opinion over the implication of the United States' position of statistical supremacy in relation to its major rivals and how best to marshal that supremacy in ways that can increase U.S. power and influence relative to other actors[40]. Some point to U.S. military expenditures – now nearly half of all defense spending world wide and more than 20 times the spending of its nearest rivals as providing the U.S. with the ability to realize a global hegemony and essentially take on the role as the new "sheriff" in the international system[41]. But others reject this point, noting that the United States in fact lacks the resources and means to operationalize a kind of unilateral hegemony[42]. Instead, the argument goes, the United States should utilize its "soft power" assets to build alliances and political relationships in ways that will allow it to achieve its objectives without an over-reliance on force or a coercive framework based on the threat of military action[43].

9.   Liberalism and the Clinton Era

Interestingly, the Clinton Administration in some respects provided the theoretical bridge between the realist approach of the Bush I administration and the neoconservative revolution in Bush II. Reflecting the principal strands of "liberalism" in American foreign policy, the Clinton Administration based its world view on a number of assumptions: 1) prosperous nations operating in an open and

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Kegley Jr., Eugene Wittkopf, *World Politics: Trends and Transformation*, 9th Ed., Belmont, CA, Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2004, pp. 35-42.

[40] Different aspects of the arguments surrounding this issue can be found in G. John Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2002.

[41] Colin Gray, *op. cit.*

[42] Mearsheimer rejects this argument, stating that it «…virtually impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony», John Mearsheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[43] Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, Cambridge, MA, Perseus Books 2004.

economically interdependent system are less likely to use force to settle disputes; 2) democracies are less likely to fight each other; 3) international institutions serve a useful purpose by helping states avoid war by building collective security based on cooperative relationships; 4) morality can and should play a role in foreign policy execution[44]. Consistent with the liberal view, the Clinton Administration sought to create conditions to spur what it saw as an ineluctable expansion of the normative, rules-based governance that would inevitably make the world a safer, more harmonious environment less prone to violence[45]. Also underpinning this worldview was an essential optimism about human nature, informed by rationality, ethics, and morality. The Clinton Administration assembled a group from the "liberal" epistemic community that drew upon these assumptions – Anthony Lake, Sandy Berger, Madeleine Albright, Strobe Talbott and William Perry – that exercised tremendous influence on foreign policy for nearly a decade.

In the Middle East, the Clinton Administration adopted the strategy of dual containment, in which it sought to simultaneously "contain" Iran and Iraq while focusing its efforts on trying to serve as broker in solving the Arab-Israeli dispute. It rejected what it saw as unwarranted pressure on the Israelis by the Bush I administration and brought into policy-making positions a number of high profile officials out of the Israeli lobby in Washington D.C., who counseled a less direct U.S. role in the peace process. On a broader level, the Clinton Administration, however, believed that solving the Arab-Israeli dispute represented the cornerstone of regional stability and that resolving this problem would then allow it to address the pressing problems of Iraq's recalcitrance and Iran's objectionable behaviors[46].

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[44] As summarized by John Mearsheimer, *op.cit.*, p. 9 and Charles Kegley Jr., Eugene Wittkopf, *op.cit.*, p 34.

[45] Best expressed in Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Avon, 1992.

[46] The Clinton Administration's approach known as *dual containment* was explained by then Clinton adviser Martin Indyk in «The Clinton Administration's Approach to

The decade saw Middle East envoys like Dennis Ross tirelessly work on the ultimately unsuccessful effort to reach a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute resulting in the failed Camp David II meetings, which was followed by the second Intifada in September 2000. Meanwhile, at the UN, the United States and officials such as UN Acting Ambassador Peter Burleigh and State Department Assistant Secretary David Welch worked equally tirelessly in the Security Council to preserve consensus on the necessity to enforce the sanctions regime against the recalcitrant Saddam. During the decade as part of this approach, the Gulf States were integrated into the U.S. security umbrella and provided the U.S. with the access to the facilities that allowed the U.S. military to enforce the no-fly zones and the trade embargo against Iraq.

In an echo of what was to come later, the Clinton Administration got maneuvered by the neoconservatives into endorsing the Iraq Liberation Act, which called for the United States to formally embrace the idea of regime change in Baghdad. The only practical impact of the legislation was to enrich neoconservative darling Ahmad Chalabi and his cronies living in London's expensive West End.

10. Liberals "Mugged by Reality"

The neoconservatives of the Bush II administration selectively took certain aspects of the liberal worldview of the Clinton Administration but married them with a much darker world view framed by the 9/11 attacks and rooted in their Cold War theology. That theology rejected the realists' "management" of Soviet relations during the Cold War, arguing that the ideologically driven Soviets remained bent on the destruction of the West and would use any means to achieve its ultimate objective. Such an adversary, it was argued, was inherently "evil" and could only be countered by military strength across the

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the Middle East», Speech to the Soref Symposium, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 18, 1993.

entire spectrum of conventional and nuclear capabilities. The neoconservative epistemic community sprouted out of a group of largely Jewish intellectuals that attended the City College of New York in the 1960s and created the neoconservative journal «The Public Interest». That core group of Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell, provided the intellectual foundations for a group that would later include Richard Perle, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Doug Feith, Frank Gaffney, Keith Payne, Elliott Abrams, Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol and Robert Kagan – to name a few.

Neoconservative theology integrated a number of common themes: 1) a belief that democracy and the framework of the internal governance of states should be an overriding consideration in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy; 2) skepticism over the ability of international institutions and multilateral treaties to manage the international environment; 3) a belief that American hegemonic power should be applied using force if necessary for moral purposes like the spread of democracy; 4) new adversaries like al-Qaida and Islamic extremists seeking mass destructive capabilities necessitated a new and more muscular foreign policy to reinvigorate America's credibility that had been largely frittered away by the Clinton Administration; 5) no negotiation was possible with the new actors not subject to deterrence, auguring in a age of unrestricted warfare; 6) last, and by no means least, all the group passionately supported Israel and embraced the Likud party's vision of a "greater Israel" encompassing most if not all of the occupied territories[47]. As applied to the Middle East, Richard

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[47] Views distilled from "Rebuilding American Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century", Project for a New American Century, Washington, DC, September 2000, accessed online at http://www.newamericancentury.org. Also drawn from Francis Fukuyama, *After Neoconservatism*, «New York Times Magazine», February 19, 2006. Other details of the group's genealogy, that later drew in Condoleezza Rice is contained in James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, New York, Viking, 2004. Role of these advisers in crafting the Bush Administration's approach in the Middle East is detailed in W. Patrick Lang, *Drinking the Kool Aid*, «Middle East Policy», vol. 11, no. 4, 2004. Also see Joshua M. Marshall, *Practice to Deceive*, «Washington Monthly», April 2003, available online at http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0304. marshall.html.

Perle drew upon several of these strands of argument when he stated in 2002:

> Hard-liners [neoconservatives] are not bent on imposing democracy on anybody. But it is realistic to notice the connection between Middle Eastern tyranny and Middle Eastern terrorism; and it is realistic too to understand that it is sometimes true that societies that yearn for freedom are denied it by force – as Iraq was by Saddam's force. The U.S. may not be able to lead countries through the door to democracy; but where that door is locked shut by a totalitarian deadbolt, American power may be the only way to open it up.[48]

During the 1980s, the neoconservatives assumed positions of power in the Reagan Administration and were instrumental in President Reagan's casting of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" during the 1980 presidential campaign. The group, including Richard Perle, Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Paul Wolfowitz, advocated an aggressive strategy called "rollback" that sought not just to contain the spread of Soviet power but to aggressively try to shrink those areas under Soviet influence around the world. To justify their aggressive approach, the group engineered the "B Team" exercise at the beginning of the Reagan Administration. In what would prove to be a precursor some 23-years later, the group came into office convinced that intelligence estimates of the Soviet threat were vastly understated. The B team looked at the existing assessments and concluded that the CIA was wrong and that the Soviets were on the verge of achieving their aim of global domination. President Reagan's label of the "Evil Empire" would again be eerily repeated by President Bush's references to good vs. evil metaphors following the 9/11 attacks[49]. Reagan's advisers came to view all regional instability through the lens of the expansion of the Soviet evil empire that needed to be countered through rollback.

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[48] David Frum and Richard Perle, *Beware the Soft-Line Ideologues*, «Wall Street Journal», January 7, 2004, p. 12.

[49] A cogent re-retelling of the "B Team" exercise and the role today's neoconservatives is contained in Leila Hudson, *The New Ivory Towers: Think Tanks, Strategic Studies and "Counterrealism"*, «Middle East Policy», vol. 12, no. 4, 2005.

Various members of this group shared a number of other important characteristics. Many of them had worked for Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson; were anti-arms control; strongly pro-Israel; favored building missile defense systems and favored the spread of democracy as central U.S. policy objective. A critical difference with the realists also was an essentially optimistic view of human nature, in which they believed that people had an innate desire for "freedom." They also believed that idealism and morality should play an important if not defining role in the conduct of foreign policy.

Various members of the group (Perle and Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad) studied under Albert Wohlstetter at the University of Chicago. During the 1960s Wohlstetter argued against the stability of mutually assured destruction on the basis that a surprise attack by an inherently untrustworthy and nefarious adversary might be impossible to respond to, particularly in view of the (at that time) inadequate preparation for a second strike capability[50]. Wohlstetter argued that «Where the published writings have not simply underestimated Soviet capabilities and the advantage of a first strike, they have in general placed artificial constraints on the Soviet use of the capabilities attributed to them»[51]. In powerful metaphors that would be all but repeated in the Bush II National Security Strategy report, Wohlstetter argued that « …we must expect a vast increase in the weight of attack which the Soviets can deliver with little warning, and the growth of significant Russian capability for an essentially warningless attack. As a result, strategic deterrence, while feasible, will be extremely difficult to achieve, and at critical junctures in the 1960s we may not have the power to deter attack»[52]. Wohlstetter's dark views over the impending collapse of deterrence and the possible descent into an age of unrestricted warfare underpinned neoconservative formulations on the

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[50] Albert Wohlstetter, *The Delicate Balance of Terror*, P 1472, Rand Corporation, 1958, available online at http://www.rand.org/publications/classics/wohlstetter/P1472/P1472.html.

[51] *Ibidem*, p. 3.

[52] *Ibidem*, p. 7.

eve of the Iraq invasion. Prior to the Iraq invasion in March 2003, various high-level Bush Administrations officials pointed to U.S. vulnerabilities to surprise attack by a nuclear adversary that, this time, came in the form of a supposedly undeterrable Saddam Hussein.

11. The Realist – Neoconservative – Liberal "Clash" Over Middle East Policy

The clash between the realist-neoconservative-liberal epistemic communities is still being thrashed out in the Middle East over the issue of democracy promotion and the war on terrorism versus the requirements for regional security and stability. The Bush Administration's active promotion of democracy around the world and in the Middle East in particular represents the tip of an intellectual iceberg, with the ideas supporting that tip greatly expanding below the surface. The battle lines between the neoconservative and realist epistemic communities have and are being played in the policy circles, the op-ed pages and talking head spaces in Washington D.C. and in associated academic communities. Interestingly, the liberals of the Clinton era have largely retreated from the public debate. In an ironic twist, the two schools of thought pit the current President Bush and his advisers against President George H.W. Bush and his advisers, most notably his national security adviser Brent Scowcroft. Persistent disagreements and personality conflicts between officials from these two communities undermined the planning for the 2003 Iraq invasion and post-war planning to disastrous consequences[53]. The battle lines in Bush II pitted the Office of the Vice President (Cheney, Scooter Libby and David Addinton), the National Security Council (Condoleezza Rice and Elliot Abrams) and the Defense Department (Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Doug Feith) against the Bush I officials in the State Department (Colin Powell and Richard Armitage).

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[53] As detailed in James Fallows, *Blind Into Baghdad*, «Atlantic Monthly», January/February 2004.

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Disagreements over the Iraq invasion had their roots in long-running disputes between these groups dating to the 1980s. The classical "realist" school of Bush I and his National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft reflected central tenets of realism. Like "classic" realists, they believed that moralism and idealism were important but not driving forces in the conduct of foreign policy. In their world view force should only be used in those situations where U.S. national interests were directly threatened. In the Middle East, the Bush I administration appeared comfortable with the traditional relationships with the Sunni monarchies and saw no reason to address the issue of internal political reforms[54]. Consistent with this worldview, Bush I marshaled the international coalition in the fall of 2001 because of his perception consistent with previous Administrations – that the United States had to respond to the threat posed to the Arabian Peninsula by Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. While the operation was cloaked in an argument about Kuwaiti sovereignty, the United States intervened militarily because it did not want Saddam potentially exercising direct or indirect control over 40 percent of the world's oil reserves. Consistent with classic realist thought, Bush I made good use of the international institutional framework to further U.S. objectives, which had the critical impact of legitimizing the use of force to expel Saddam[55]. Once evicted by the coalition, the United States allowed Saddam to withdraw and watched on the sidelines as Saddam then brutally put down the Shiite uprising in southern Iraq. The neoconservatives viewed the Bush Administration's actions after Gulf War I as an indefensible betrayal of the Shiite rebels that had been tacitly encouraged into open revolt. The sordid end to Gulf War I in combination with the pressure brought by the Bush I Administration on the Israelis by the withholding of housing loan guarantees lead the neoconservatives to abandon Bush I during his re-election loss against William Clinton in 1992.

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[54] The thinking of Brent Scowcroft and the wider realist framework of Bush I is interestingly addressed in Jeffrey Goldberg, *Breaking Ranks*, «The New Yorker», vol. 81, no. 33, October 31, 2005.

12. Neoconservatism, Orientalism, and Middle Eastern Studies

As the neoconservatives aligned themselves around the Bush II candidacy in 2000, another element combined to help create all the elements necessary for the "perfect storm" in the epistemic communities vying for influence in U.S. policy in the Middle East. Just as the Team B exercise had served as a useful platform to discredit intelligence community assessments of the Soviet Union 20 years earlier, the 9/11 attacks created a firestorm within Middle Eastern studies that helped provide another of the supporting elements of the narrative successfully crafted by the neoconservative before Gulf War II. In some respects, the public battle within Middle Eastern studies mirrored the parallel intra-bureaucratic turf battles during the 1990s in which the supposed "Arabists" within the State Department's Near East Asia bureau became supplanted by the Clinton Administration's "peace process" group drawn from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a creation of the Israeli lobby[56]. In the public sphere, the 1990s saw academic and area studies experts slowly but surely crowded out of the media-driven policy debate by Washington-based think tanks like the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, The Saban Center at Brookings (created in 2002), the American Enterprise Institute, Project for a New American Century, the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the Heritage Foundation, the Center for Security Policy, the Foreign Policy Research Institute and other groups that all strongly supported Israeli interests[57].

The 9/11 attacks provided the opportunity for the gloves to come off the simmering debate within the Middle Eastern studies community, a debate that provided the neoconservatives with important supporting

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[55] I am indebted to Anne Clunan for "connecting the dots" in placing the Bush I Presidency and Gulf War I in a classical realist framework.

[56] Lineage of the "Arabists" is detailed in Robert Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite*, New York, The Free Press, 1993.

[57] More details in Leila Hudson, *op. cit.*

intellectual ammunition in building a bridge from their general world view to Middle East policy. In the introduction of his searing indictment of the Middle Eastern studies academic community, Martin Kramer wrote in *Ivory Towers on Sand*: «It is no exaggeration to say that America's academics have failed to predict or explain the major evolutions of Middle Eastern politics and society over the past two decades. Time and again, academics have been taken by surprise by their subjects; time and again, their paradigms have been swept away by events. Repeated failures have depleted the credibility of scholarship among influential publics»[58]. Kramer further accused the academic group known as the Middle East Studies Association of anti-Israeli bias, shoddy and irrelevant scholarship and as having a disconnected, romanticized view of the social, political and economic structures in the Arab Middle East. These scholars, Kramer argued, constituted nothing more than apologists for Arab radicals who were blinded by their own ill-informed analysis and ideological predispositions.

Kramer's accusations reignited the simmering bitterness over Edward Said's accusations against the "orientalist" school of Middle East studies made to great effect in 1978[59]. Said argued that Western views of the Arabs and the Middle East were themselves held captive to the romantic views of the region based largely on outdated study of Ottoman history developed at Oxford and Cambridge Universities and practiced by such scholars as Bernard Lewis. Said believed that certain "dogmas" pervaded the orientalist study of the region.

> …one is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a "classical" Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and

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[58] Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, Washington D.C., Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001.

[59] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage, 1978.

incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically "objective". A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at the bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible).

Said aimed particularly vitriolic broadsides against the eminent Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis, whose controversial 1990 article "The Roots of Muslim Rage" and later book, *What Went Wrong*, were attacked by Said for their caricatured and ill-informed characterizations of the Middle East[60]. Lewis believed that Turkey's wrenching turn towards secularized, western-style democracy in the 1920s provided a model that could be emulated in other regional states – notably Iraq. In the "Roots of Muslim Rage" Lewis argued, much like the neoconservative arguments during the 1980s, for an impending clash between Islam and the West. Echoing neoconservative views of the Soviets, Lewis argued that the roots of the supposed "rage" ran so deep that accommodation with the Muslims was difficult if not possible. Lewis is generally credited with the coining the phrase "clash of civilizations" to describe this impending conflict – an idea built on to great effect by Samuel Huntington. Lewis's expertise was sought out by various senior Bush II Administration officials after September 11th and prior to the Iraq invasion he is widely believed to have told Vice President Cheney that the Arabs above all respected the use of force and should not be coddled by feel-good nurturing policies. As reported by Jeff Goldberg:

> Scowcroft suggested that the White House was taking the wrong advice, and listening to a severely limited circle. He singled out the Princeton Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis, who was consulted by Vice-President Cheney and others after the terror

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[60] Lewis's article *Roots of Muslim Rage*, first appeared in the September 1990 issue of *The Atlantic*; *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

attacks of September 11, 2001. Lewis, Scowcroft said, fed a feeling in the White House that the United States must assert itself. «It's that idea that we've got to hit somebody hard», Scowcroft said. And Bernard Lewis says, «I believe that one of the things you've got to do to Arabs is hit them between the eyes with a big stick. They respect power»[61].

But if the epistemological foundation of the Orientalists remained rooted in the supposedly outdated interpretations of Ottoman History, another supporting element to Lewis's prescriptive framework were founded on the views of the Arabs themselves. Another powerful intellectual foundation for the reasoning behind Lewis' book *What Went Wrong* was that the Arabs were simply unable to compete with the more advanced Western societies and had to be shown how to "do" democracy. Here, another of the intellectual bridges to understanding the orientalist view of the Middle East was provided by Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind*[62] that fed into the Lewis and the neoconservative arguments that the Arabs had a particular and exceptional cultural pathology. Patai's book offered up caricatured explanations of Arab behavior based on such things as child rearing techniques that helped produce a national character featuring an unwillingness to do hard work, verbal bluster without action, emotionalism and exaggeration and hatred of the West – to name but a few[63]. These caricatured views helped provide the supporting epistemological framework for the "they [the Arabs] respect force" message passed by Lewis to Vice President Cheney and other senior Bush Administration officials – a message also reflecting Likud thinking on this issue.

In short, the Iraq invasion represented a "perfect storm" in which the neoconservative world view effectively became married to the

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[61] Jeffrey Goldberg, *op. cit.*

[62] Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, New York, Sribner's, 1973.

[63] The negative consequences of drawing upon Patai's work for cultural education are highlighted by Capt. Peter Munson, USMC, in *Cultural Education and the Reading Program*, «Marine Corps Gazette», January 2006, p. 49.

orientalist view of the Middle East. Whatever commentators might assert about a supposed softening of the Bush Administration's approach to the region in its second term, the legacy of the first term will shape the problems and policy options confronting the United States for the foreseeable future.

13. Epistemic Communities and the Future of U.S. Policy in the Middle East

The debate over the interpretation of events in the Middle East continues today and is as shrill as ever, and the stakes for U.S. strategy and policy have never been higher. The neoconservatives and their orientalist allies remain bowed by events in Iraq – but not beaten. Assuming that the general constructivist framework of this paper – that people and their ideas matter – is correct, the legacy of the neoconservative revolution of Bush II will continue to exert a powerful influence on U.S. strategy and policy in the Middle East. It could be argued, in fact, that the gradual descent into anarchy in Iraq only confirms the dark neoconservative worldview that has been previously outlined. The specter of a coming clash between "good" and "evil" remains a powerful (and politically dangerous) metaphor used by neoconservatives and their orientalist allies in their continued attempt to shape policy and strategy.

Writing in March 2006 in the aftermath of the rioting of Muslims in the Middle East and Central Asia over the Danish cartoons, Martin Kramer poignantly voiced these arguments when he darkly warned:

> The West (and Israel) have mocked the prophet – not Muhammad, but Samuel Huntington, author of *A Clash of Civilizations*. Our elites have spent a decade denying the truth at the core of his thesis: that the Islamic world and the West are bound to collide. Even now, we glibly predict that possession of political power and nuclear weapons will make Islamists act predictably. It all makes perfect sense – to us. But the cartoon affair and the Hamas elections are timely reminders that our perfect sense isn't theirs. Fortunately, it isn't too late. There is a

clash of civilizations, but there isn't yet a war of the worlds. «You do not have God», they say. «God is with us». That is their prayer. But they lack power, resources and weapons. Today they burn flags; a united West can still deny them the means to burn more. It can do so if it acts swiftly and resolutely, to keep nuclear fire out of Iran's hands, and to assure that Hamas fails[64].

The neoconservative/orientalist vision of the Middle East maintains powerful roots in the Washington D.C. think tank community that has come to dominate the public foreign policy discourse over the Middle Eastern issues. Think tanks with benefactors boasting deep pockets continue to provide a steady stream of experts and supporting studies that will ensure that future U.S. administrations will by default draw upon their expertise to face the challenge of formulating and executing policy to meet the challenges outlined in this paper: (1) creating a stable political and economic climate to ensure that the Gulf producers can expand production to meet global demand; (2) addressing the region's structural sources of insecurity that flow from demographics, water and resource shortages that will create an impending crisis of governance in the region; and (3) using U.S. power and influence to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute. Unfortunately, neither U.S. political party shows any sign of becoming more forcefully involved in solving the Arab-Israeli dispute and seem content to subsidize Israel's construction of its 400-mile security barrier that, according to conservative commentator, will leave «Hamas free to cobble together a state from the patchwork of land left, sans East Jerusalem, which can be neither viable nor contiguous, as pledged by Mr. Bush. Intifada III is now only a matter of time – with rockets and missiles over the wall»[65].

Leaving aside the pressing array of tactical issues facing the United States in the region, this paper argues that the shape of U.S. strategy

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[64] Martin Kramer, *Islam's Coming Crusade*, «Jerusalem Report», Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 20, 2006.

[65] Arnaud de Borchgrave, *The Fifth Horseman*, «Washington Times», March 17, 2006, p. 19.

and policy will be determined by which combination of epistemic communities rise to positions of power and influence. The neoconservatives have moved on from the Iraq disaster and embraced the Huntington-Lewis-Kramer thesis of the impending clash of civilizations that will, among other things, drive the United States into an even closer partnership with Israel (if that is possible).

It is unclear whether the realists can ever re-emerge as a force to shape U.S. policy in the Middle East. It is equally unclear whether the liberals of the Clinton era can coalesce around an alternative vision of the region that it can connect to a supporting policy framework. Important voices have been raised questioning the value of the United States pushing democracy in the Middle East. Republican Senator Chuck Hagel recently stated that «You cannot in my opinion just impose a democratic form of government on a country with no history and no culture and no tradition of democracy»[66]. But views like this from a Senator outside the conservative Republican mainstream have the echo of a bygone era when it was possible to have comfortable relations with the Gulf oil monarchies simultaneously with support for Israel.

Unequivocal support for Israel has now become a de facto litmus test for all epistemic communities seeking to participate in the foreign policy process involving the Middle East, despite the fact that Israel has in many respects become a strategic albatross for the United States. The nature of the relationship makes it more difficult for the United States to prosecute its war against bin Laden, deal with the so-called regional "rogue states", prevent WMD proliferation, and craft a region-wide approach to balance the requirements of stability and democracy promotion[67]. Yet, the domestic political power of the Israeli lobby has made it anathema for any public official to declare

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[66] As quoted in Steven Weisman, *Democracy Push by Bush Attracts Doubters in Party*, «New York Times», March 17, 2006, Internet Edition.

[67] Detailed by John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt, *The Israeli Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Faculty Research Working Paper Series, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, March 2006.

anything less than total commitment to Israel. As noted by political scientists John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt «This litmus test forces any aspiring policymaker to become an overt supporter of Israel, which is why public critics of Israeli policy have become an endangered species in the U.S. foreign policy establishment»[68]. The litmus test against public officials has also been insidiously mounted against the academia, with the intimidation of allegedly anti-Israeli scholars by Daniel Pipes and Martin Kramer's posting of dossiers of suspect academics on their campus watch website.

All these factors affect the epistemic communities that can rise through the competitive process to assume positions of prominence in foreign policy execution. In essence, the overwhelming power of the Israeli lobby on American politics and the equally important role that their associated think tanks play in shaping the public debate mean that ideas and the power of ideas from different epistemic communities are negated. At a time when multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary analysis is required to provide creative policy solutions to address complicated structural sources of regional insecurity, epistemic communities that can be an important source of ideas and energy are being driven from the issue space over the issue of political correctness.

Another powerful limiting domestic political force that will affect groups vying for influence over Middle East policy is the "security issue" in American politics. The so-called global war on terror in effect has become America's new Cold War, with Republicans and conservatives holding the domestic political high ground over their Democratic competitors. The requirement to appear "tough on terror" will further shape and shrink the intellectual space for epistemic communities to frame strategy and policy in the Middle East and will by default play to conservative groups in the issue space selling the impending clash of cultures to the sound-byte driven media.

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[68] *Ibidem*, p. 18.

In conclusion, it remains difficult to see the prospect of a healthy theoretical and intellectual evolution following the neoconservative debacle in Iraq and the wider region. While some commentators like Francis Fukuyama have called for a new foreign policy that balances the neoconservative Wilsonian idealism with a more nuanced appreciation of the region, it is difficult to see how such an epistemic community can rise to prominence give the current constraints placed on the issue area by the Israeli litmus test referenced by Mearsheimer and Walt. The United States will continue to see its influence and power decline in a region moving inexorably into an uncertain and dangerous future if it continues to artificially limit the access of different epistemic communities to the foreign policy arena.