Chapter 7

The Foreign Policy Establishment and the "Islamic Threat"

In September 2000, the neoconservative think tank Project for a New American Century released a document outlining its foreign policy vision. It called for the United States to use overwhelming military force to take control of the Persian Gulf region and for "maintaining global US preeminence . . . and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests."[1] This goal, the report went on to add, was going to take some time to be realized "absent some catastrophic event—like a new Pearl Harbor."[2] On September 11, 2001, such an event did occur—at a time when the neoconservative wing of the foreign policy establishment held powerful positions in the George W. Bush presidency.

September 11, however, precipitated unanimous agreement in the foreign policy establishment that the War on Terror would henceforth frame US foreign policy. Barely had the ashes settled from the Twin Towers when loud proclamations that "Islamic terrorists" represented existential threats to the United States began to echo in the public sphere. From then on, US policy was geared toward "keeping Americans safe" from Muslim "evildoers." These claims fly in the face of reality, as the previous chapter outlined, since Islamist organizations typically emerge from local conditions and are focused on those conditions. What then lies behind this Islamophobic rhetoric? The agenda behind this focus on the "Islamic threat" is the subject of this chapter.

We begin with the neoconservative vision of the post–Cold War world, because it was this logic that informed the United States' response

to 9/11. Even though President Obama dropped the phrase "War on Terror" in an effort to rehabilitate US imperialism after Bush's failures, he nevertheless continued Bush-era policies. We therefore start with the story of the neocons and their rise to power, with an emphasis on locating this strand of thought within the larger foreign policy establishment. Broadly speaking, there are two factions in the policy establishment: the neocons and the "balance-of-forces realist" camp. At times these camps debate, and at others they cooperate. While there are differences in rhetoric and at times strategy, the neocon and liberal/realist factions of the foreign policy establishment are united in their commitment to the project of US imperialism. The overarching threat of "Islamic terrorism" provides a useful cover for their imperial ambitions.

The Neocons

The term "neoconservative" was coined in the early 1970s by Michael Harrington, who is associated with the democratic socialist tradition in the United States, as a way to distance former allies (some liberals, others socialists) who had started to gravitate to the right.[3] These turncoats included figures such as Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Michael Novak, Nathan Glazer, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Most of the first generation of neocons supported the United States' war with Vietnam and resented the antiwar movement. They saw themselves as liberals who believed in the idea that America was a force for good in the world and that it should maintain global stability and intervene militarily when needed. They stood against the "bad liberals" who championed George McGovern's bid for the presidency in 1972, viewing them as operating with a politics of "appeasement" and liberal guilt.[4] Many opposed Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" program of domestic reform as well.

The neocons' vision of imperialism is premised on the notion of American exceptionalism: "a pervasive faith in the uniqueness, immutability, and superiority of the country's founding liberal principles, accompanied by a conviction that the United States has a special destiny among nations."[5] This vision of the United States as a unique "beacon for other nations" because of its liberal values is taken for granted within the policy establishment as a whole.[6] However, what is different about the neocons is their singular commitment to unipolarism and militarism. As Danny Cooper writes, the neocons "have been nothing if not consistent in their

belief that only overwhelming American military preponderance can prevent the outbreak of great power war . . . [and] that multipolar international orders lead to great power war." In short, what defines the neoconservatives is the notion of a unipolar world dominated by the United States, which they believe is in the interests of all; "American military preponderance is good for America, and good for the world."[7]

It follows, therefore, that they drew different conclusions than the liberals about the United States' role in the world after the defeat in Vietnam. As Gary Dorien notes, the liberal imperialism of the 1940s and '50s "combined a liberal internationalist commitment to the United Nations and international law with a balance of power realism in diplomacy and an ideological abhorrence of Communism."[8] After Vietnam, Cold War liberals backed away from open confrontation and intervention, a posture the neocons saw as weak. For them, any accommodation to the Soviet camp was surrendering to the enemy in the name of realism. Alternatively, they advocated an interventionist strategy with huge increases in military spending.

Several neocons held high positions during the Reagan era, such as Bill Kristol (Irving Kristol's son), Richard Perle, Richard Pipes, and Paul Wolfowitz. They retained the "neo" prefix in order to differentiate themselves from the isolationist (noninterventionist) wing of conservatism. Some even stood to the right of Reagan—such as Podhoretz, editor of the neocon magazine *Commentary*, who argued that liberals were fools and that gay people opposed war because of their lust for "helpless, good-looking boys."[9] Frank Gaffney, who founded the Center for Strategic Policy (CSP) think tank, argued that the Soviet leader Gorbachev had seduced Reagan with false promises.[10]

When the Soviet Union did eventually collapse, the next generation of neocons developed a vision for the post–Cold War world that was premised on the notion of American dominance in a unipolar world. Charles Krauthammer, a nationally syndicated journalist best known for his writing in the *Washington Post*, articulated this position in a 1990 piece titled "The Unipolar Moment" published in the preeminent foreign policy journal *Foreign Affairs*.[11] Krauthammer argued that the end of the Cold War had created a "single pole of world power." This single superpower, the United States, could therefore intervene anywhere it wanted around the world and set the terms of world politics. In order to realize this vision, Krauthammer continued, it was necessary to marginalize the arguments

of the realists and the isolationists in the policy establishment, who did not realize how important it was for one hegemonic power to rule in order for there to be global stability.

This article was followed by a report prepared for the Pentagon by Paul Wolfowitz (at the request of Dick Cheney) with the help of Scooter Libby, Richard Perle, Zalmay Khalilzad, and others. The "Defense Planning Guidance" (DPG) report was not intended for public consumption but was leaked to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The document stated that the United States' first objective should be to "prevent the re-emergence of a new rival."[12] It went on to assert that it must "establish and protect a new order" and that potential competitors should be convinced that "they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests."[13] In short, a *pax Americana* should be established on the military, political, and economic fronts. Even advanced industrialized nations would be discouraged from seeking to "overturn the [United States'] established political and economic order."[14] It followed from this that the United States would act alone if it needed to, in a unilateral manner, with no questions asked. This, the report stated, would guarantee world stability in a way that neither the United Nations nor any other multilateral coalitions could.

In order to maintain world stability, the report continued, the United States was right to wage preemptive war on any aggressor. It named a number of state actors as aggressors, from Iraq and North Korea to India and Japan. Post-Soviet Russia was also viewed as a potentially destabilizing force. Additionally, preemptive strikes were warranted against any threat to US interests. At the time, these ideas were critiqued harshly by the policy establishment; the report was a political embarrassment for the elder Bush. The backlash was so strong that Wolfowitz believed his political career to be over. The document was revised, and a softer version replaced the original. It was not yet the neocons' time—as we will see shortly, the 1990s were to be the era of "humanitarian imperialism," led by Clinton and the liberal imperialists.

What is noteworthy about the document, though, is that the enemies it named were diverse and the list of national interests was broad; these included "access to vital raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, threats to US citizens from terrorism or regional or local conflict, and threats to US society from narcotics trafficking."[15] Thus, "terrorism" was named as one

among several threats faced by the United States. In fact, Krauthammer's article didn't even mention terrorism,[16] an omission for which he would later atone in an article where he stated that the "new threat [Islamism] is as evil as the old Evil Empire." Several neocons and their sympathizers began to advance this notion that "Islamic terrorism" needed to be viewed as the new post–Cold War enemy, as discussed in chapter 4. Daniel Pipes (first-generation neocon Richard Pipes's son) echoed this point, writing, "Like communism during the Cold War, Islam is a threat to the West." In short, even before the events of 9/11, the neocons were attempting to replace the Soviet Union with a new archnemesis.[17] However, only after 9/11 could this notion come to fruition. Norman Podhoretz, in his 2007 book *World War IV: The Long Struggle against Islamofascism*, compared Islamism to fascism and argued that the struggle against "Islamofascism" was just as important as the previous world wars. In part, this line of argument, with its association between fascism and Islam, came from the neoconservatives' right-wing, Likud-style Zionism, a topic to which we turn next.

The Israel Connection

In a *Wall Street Journal* piece titled "What the Heck Is a 'Neocon'?," leading neocon Max Boot stated unequivocally that "support for Israel" has been and remains a "key tenet of neoconservatism."[18] Many of the first generation of neocons were Jewish and found themselves alienated by the New Left's sympathy for the Palestinian struggle and for Third World causes more broadly. Yet the Jewish experience does not automatically translate into a hard-right Likud-style politics. As Richard Seymour observes, "It is clearly the case that, for many Jewish neoconservatives, their Jewish identity mattered; but there are surely a variety of ways of experiencing life as a Jewish immigrant in the United States, and many more ways of relating to that experience."[19]

Thus, the roots of neocon hard-line Zionism lie less in its Jewish adherents' ethnic identity and more in their politics and in a particular worldview that sees Israel as instrumental in advancing American power.[20] If the United States was going to maintain its dominance in the Middle East, it followed that Israel, the most pro-American country in the region, had to be its key ally. As Dorien notes, most "unipolarist leaders were Jewish neoconservatives who took for granted that a militantly pro-Israel policy was

in America's interest. Wolfowitz, Perle, Podhoretz, Krauthammer, [Ben] Wattenberg, [Joshua] Muravchik, both Kristols, Kagan, Boot, and Kaplan fit that description."[21] Yet this position was also held by prominent non-Jews such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, James Woolsey, Francis Fukuyama, Zalmay Khalilzad, Linda Chavez, and others.

At any rate, Israel has always been central to neocon thinking—so much so that for years neocons accused "Arabist" State Department officials of promoting "anti-Israel" policies to curry favor with oil-rich Arab dictators.[22] Three of the lobby groups and think tanks associated with neoconservatism focus solely on the Middle East—the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), and the Middle East Forum (MEF). All three are pro-Zionist institutions that spend time and resources analyzing US strategy in the Middle East and lobbying for Zionist positions. Additionally, neocons have held positions on the boards of other think tanks such as the conservative and pro-Zionist American Enterprise Institute (AEI), with which they are closely associated, as well as the right-wing Hudson Institute. A neocon and senior fellow of the Hudson Institute, the Israeli-born Meyrav Wurmser, established the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) in 1998. MEMRI mainly seeks out news media articles from Middle East sources that cast the region and its politics in a negative light and translates them for domestic media consumption. (The equivalent of this institute in the Middle East might be one that selectively translated Fox News broadcasts or the rants of televangelists on the Christian Broadcasting Network as the key lens through which to understand the United States.) Another cofounder was a former colonel in the Israeli military intelligence organization.[23] Before the establishment of Bill Kristol's *Weekly Standard* in 1997 (incidentally located in the same building as the AEI office), the leading neocon publication was *Commentary*, which Podhoretz edited for thirty-five years. The journal was published by the American Jewish Committee, whose stated mission is to "safeguard the welfare and security of Jews in the United States, in Israel and throughout the world."[24]

Concretely speaking, neocon positions on Israel are in line with right-wing Zionist or Likud-style politics, combined with an abhorrence of any negotiations that show compromise and weakness. It follows, therefore, that the neocons were strongly opposed to the Oslo Accords, which were based on the principle of mutual recognition through a process of "land for peace." When Yasser Arafat signed the agreement on the White House lawn in 1993, President Clinton told him that he could proclaim a "state" in the Occupied Territories and become its president. In exchange for US and Israeli recognition of this "state," Arafat was asked to sign away long-standing—and historically just—Palestinian claims on three major issues: the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and the right of return, and sovereignty over their land. The neocons viewed this as a mistake. Even though Israel had no intention of upholding any of its pledges and the United States had no intention of forcing Israel to comply, the neocons vociferously opposed the Oslo Accords, seeing the deal as an Israeli, and by extension American, retreat. Consistent with their opposition to the deals Reagan struck with the Soviet Union, the neocons argued that Oslo would lead to the dissolution of Israeli power. Frank Gaffney and the CSP stated that the "land for peace" formula was nothing more than a series of "*retreats* by Israel—unilateral, headlong surrenders of strategically vital real estate" to the Arabs who were "committed to its destruction" (emphasis in original).[25]

In 1996, the neocons advised Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with whom they continue to have close ties, that what Israel needed to do to secure itself was to destabilize and overthrow Arab governments. They published a document titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," arguing that Israel should attack Syrian military targets in Lebanon and even Syria if necessary.[26] At the time, conventional wisdom saw Iraq as a major threat to Israel, and the neocons urged Netanyahu to support the Jordanian Hashemites' challenge to Iraq's borders.

This argument was similar to a position developed in the 1980s by the right-wing Likud party in Israel.[27] The argument went that Israel should fragment, dissolve, or otherwise weaken the neighboring Arab states as a way to shore up its own safety. The logic was that since most of the support for the Palestinian cause came from Arab nations, weakening the latter would help destroy the Palestinian movement. As Noam Chomsky put it, "It is only natural to expect that Israel will seek to destabilize the surrounding states, for essentially the reasons that led South Africa on a similar course in the region. In fact, given continuing military tensions, that might be seen virtually as a security imperative."[28] When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, it was pursuing this vision. It would, however, come to realize over the course of years that such a unilateral war-oriented strategy was not going to succeed.

Nevertheless, this thinking continued on both sides of the Atlantic and was the basis, Stephen Sniegoski argues, for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Bush plan to destabilize the Middle East in order to reconstruct it based on the neocons' vision. He writes that

> in contrast to the [United States'] traditional goal of stability [as a way to secure access to oil], the neocons called for destabilizing existing regimes. Of course, the neocons couched their policy in terms of the eventual *restabilization* of the region on a democratic basis. . . . Likudnik strategy saw the benefit of regional destabilization for its own sake—creating as it would an environment of weak, disunified states or statelets involved in internal and external conflicts that could be easily dominated by Israel . . . [and] without outside support, the Palestinians would be forced to accede to whatever type of peaceful solution Israel offered.[29]

Such is the relationship and coincidence of interests between the Likud right in Israel and the neocons in the United States.

Another avenue of cooperation was the development of the notion of the "terrorist threat." Richard Pipes, Podhoretz, Wattenberg, and even the neocon idol Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson attended an important conference on international terrorism in Israel in 1979. In addition to these figures, several Israeli politicians like Likud party founder Menachem Begin, as well as the elder George Bush and high-level officials from European countries, were in attendance.[30] The conference, held in Jerusalem, was organized by the Jonathan Institute, then headed by Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu founded the institute in 1977 and named it after his younger brother Jonathan, who in Netanyahu's words "fell in the battle against terrorism."[31] In his opening remarks at the conference, Netanyahu's father Benzion sought to project Israel's enemies—Palestinians who had taken up armed struggle for self-determination—as "terrorists" and to rally the rest of the world around the struggle against "terrorism." The terrorist, Benzion continued, "speaks of 'humanitarian' and national causes, he pretends to fight for 'freedom' against oppression, he keeps speaking of 'legitimate rights.'" To counter this, he argued that this terrorist actually has "no moral restraints" and "respects no code of law." Instead, he belongs in the same camp as Nazis; "in his genocidal attitude he takes toward the societies he assails, whether it is Ireland, Lebanon, or Israel, he is an offshoot of Nazi philosophy."[33] The conference was called therefore to "serve as the beginning of a new process—the process of rallying the democracies of the world to struggle against terrorism and the dangers it represents."[34]

One presenter argued that the PLO had served as an intermediary between Moscow and Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in the plot to overthrow the US-backed Shah.[35] At this stage the emphasis was on the PLO and the conflation of Arabs with terrorism. Only one presenter spoke about "Islamic terrorism,"[36] and overall, Islam was marginal to this conference.

This changed at the second International Conference on Terrorism (ICT), held in 1984 in Washington, DC. During his opening remarks, Netanyahu stated that "modern terrorism has its roots in two movements that have assumed international prominence in the second half of the twentieth century, communist totalitarianism and Islamic (and Arab) radicalism."[37] By this stage, Iran had come to be a thorn in Israel's side with its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Arab radicalism was bracketed while Islamism took center stage. State actors—particularly the Soviet Union and Iran—were seen as giving life to international terrorism. The PLO was not omitted; its "terrorist mini-state in Lebanon" was presented as "a training center and launching group for what had become a kind of terrorist international."[38] Presenters at the conference included neocons such as Moynihan, Kirkpatrick, and Krauthammer, as well as Israeli leaders such as Yitzhak Rabin and American politicians such as George Shultz. A new addition to this conference was a session on "Terrorism and the Islamic World," which included the Orientalists Bernard Lewis, Elie Kedourie, and Panyotidis Vatikiotis.

Lewis argued at the conference that the term "Islamic terrorism" was apt because "Islam is a political religion" and Muhammad, in contrast to other religious leaders, had "founded a state and governed it."[39] In other words, although terrorism carried out by Christians or Jews is not typically referred to as "Christian terrorism" or "Jewish terrorism," linking Islam to the violence of Muslims was deemed appropriate. Lewis explained that it was "inevitable that when the Islamic world confronts the problem of terrorism, that problem, too, assumes a religious, indeed in a sense an Islamic, aspect."[40] Elie Kedourie began his speech by stating that there is "a prevalent—and justifiable—impression that an appreciable part of terrorist activities today originate, and frequently take place, in the world of Islam, and particularly in its Arab portion."[41] He then cherry-picked historical examples from various Muslim kingdoms, starting with the assassination of Ali, going on to the Assassins of the tenth century,

and up to Khomeini's Iran, which "exemplifies the idea of a 'terrorist state,'"[42] to knit together a narrative of transhistoric "Islamic terrorism." He ended by raising the alarm that "terrorism in modern Islam is unlikely to prove a flash in the pan."[43]

While the 1984 ICT was held in Washington, DC, signaling that the United States would lead the world in the war on terrorists, its origins in Israel should be kept in mind. Israel was going through a series of changes in the 1980s. In the mid-1970s, the parties of the religious right (the *haredim*) started to play a greater role in domestic politics. These parties were responsible for raising the level of hateful rhetoric against non-Jews. One rabbi stated that the "Arabs are a cancer, cancer, cancer in the midst of us. . . . There is only one solution, no other, no partial solution: the Arabs out! Out! . . . Let me become defense minister for two months and you will not have a single cockroach around here."[44] As Fred Halliday notes, it was in this context that anti-Arab and anti-Muslim rhetoric came together to a much greater extent, especially among the settler community as well as the nationalist and religious parties. However, these sentiments did not prevent the Likud party from using the precursor organization to Hamas, the Mujamma, for its own purposes. When the Israeli state recognized and formally licensed the Mujamma in 1978, the logic was simple—the Islamists' hostility to the secular left made them useful. Some have argued that Israel even funded these forces.[45]

As the 1980s progressed, however, the Iranian revolution and its support of the Shi'a movement in Lebanon, combined with the emergence of Hamas, caused a shift in strategy. As Halliday writes, "By the late 1980s and the early 1990s it did, therefore, appear as if Israel was locked into an overarching battle with the Islamic world."[46] It is from here that the linkages between Islamism and fascism begin to take root, the product of an interchange between Western Orientalists and Likud political thinkers in Israel. These forces worked to convince politicians that "Islamic terrorism" was the next great threat. Daniel Pipes, writing on behalf of the MEF in the 1990s, stated his opposition to Oslo by casting suspicion on the intentions of the Arab leaders and warning of the "threat of militant Islam against America and the West."[47] But despite the efforts of the neocons and Israeli lobbyists, this attitude toward "Islamic terrorism" did not significantly impact the rhetoric or policy of the first Bush and Clinton administrations, as discussed in chapter 4. The 1990s were the era of liberal imperialism, and the neocons would have to wait their turn.

Before we turn to Clinton and humanitarian imperialism, however, it is worth noting that many of the think tanks and lobbying groups cited above are not exclusively neocon hubs. WINEP, for instance, has a "mix of neoconservative and Clintonite views," according to Maria Ryan.[48] WINEP was founded by Martin Indyk, who formerly served as the research director of the pro-Israel lobby group American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). James Woolsey, Perle, and Wolfowitz served on its board, and Muravchik and Pipes were adjunct scholars. During the 1990s, though, WINEP was largely supportive of Clinton's policies and many of its leading lights, including Indyk, joined the Clinton administration. Unqualified support for Zionism is a bipartisan requirement in the US policy establishment. Similarly, as of 2007, JINSA's board of fifty-five advisors included only four neocons. As we shall see in the next section, neocons are represented on the boards of various realist/liberal imperialist think tanks as well. In short, the neocons are an integral part of a foreign policy establishment that is pro-Israel and pro–US imperialism. The differences emerge in tactics, strategy, and rhetoric.

Humanitarian Imperialism

Liberal rhetoric has long been deployed in the interest of imperial aims. Richard Seymour, in his book *The Liberal Defence of Murder*, outlines this sordid history, stating that the "tradition of imperial liberalism is almost as old and perplexing as liberalism itself. On the face of it, a doctrine that appears to stress human equality and universalism ought to have nothing to do with a violent system of domination and exploitation. Yet, for many liberals, the virtues of empire were then *very much as they are now* for 'liberal interventionists': it promised pedagogy, cultural therapy, economic development, the rule of law, liberty, and even, sometimes, feminism"[49] (emphasis added).

In a similar vein, Jean Bricmont argues in his book *Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell Wars* that the "ideology of our times, at least when it comes to legitimizing war, is no longer Christianity, nor Kipling's 'white man's burden' or the 'civilizing mission' of the French Republic, but is a certain discourse on human rights and democracy, mixed in with a particular representation of the Second World War. This discourse justifies Western interventions in the Third World in the name of the defense of democracy and human rights or against the 'new Hitlers.'"[50] While

Bricmont may be too hasty in dismissing the uses of the "white man's burden" logic, given the revival of Orientalism in the post-9/11 era (as discussed in chapter 3), he is correct to point to democracy and human rights as the key rationales for war. These liberal arguments, however, aren't only the tools of liberal imperialists—they are part of the neocons' arsenal as well. After all, the Bush administration used women's rights as justification for the 2001 war on Afghanistan and named "democracy-building" a goal in Iraq. The difference between the neoconservative and liberal imperialist wings of the policy establishment lies in the latter's recourse to multilateralism and coalition-building when possible (though not always), as well as a willingness to employ diplomacy. As Stephen Walt states:

> The only important intellectual difference between neoconservatives and liberal interventionists is that the former have disdain for international institutions (which they see as constraints on U.S. power), and the latter see them as a useful way to legitimate American dominance. Both groups extol the virtues of democracy, both groups believe that U.S. power—and especially its military power—can be a highly effective tool of statecraft. Both groups are deeply alarmed at the prospect that WMD might be in the hands of anybody but the United States and its closest allies, and both groups think it is America's right and responsibility to fix lots of problems all over the world. Both groups consistently over-estimate how easy it will be to do this, however, which is why each has a propensity to get us involved in conflicts where our vital interests are not engaged and that end up costing a lot more than they initially expect.[51]

He adds humorously that "liberal interventionists are just 'kinder, gentler' neocons, and neocons are just liberal interventionists on steroids."[52] Both strategies, however, have been employed by Republicans and Democrats. George H. W. Bush advocated US global dominance through the use of coalitions and bodies like the UN and eschewed advice from neocon circles, as we saw in chapter 4. It was for the Clinton administration, however, to rework the United States' global image through the use of the language of "humanitarian intervention."

Anthony Lake, Clinton's national security advisor, argued that during the era of "the Cold War we contained a global threat to market democracies." Now, after the collapse of the Soviet threat, it was possible to "consolidate the victory of democracy and open markets."[53] Consequently, the Clinton vision was about promoting democracy through

neoliberal reforms. The world needed to be made safe for neoliberal capitalism—and Clinton took it upon himself to penetrate areas of the world previously under Soviet control. As Jean-Marc Coicaud puts it, "Clinton made American economic success and free trade the defining aspect of his presidency."[54] Where military intervention was needed, Clinton resorted to multilateral institutions like the UN and NATO. The key voices in his foreign policy team were Lake, Madeleine Albright, Warren Christopher, and his close friend and advisor Strobe Talbott (of the centrist Brookings Institute). This team advocated the use of military power to pursue more humanitarian goals than before and underscored the priorities of democracy and human rights. They were also opposed to the "go it alone" style and advocated that, as much as possible, the United States should pursue a multilateral strategy.[55] Clinton's "new Wilsonian" view, which stood in contrast to the elder Bush's balance-of-power realism, was premised on the notion that US policy had entered, as Noam Chomsky put it, a "noble phase" with a "saintly glow."[56]

The most important think tank associated with the multilateralist camp of the foreign policy establishment is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which publishes the journal *Foreign Affairs*. Its board of directors includes Richard Haass (CFR president since 2003), Zbigniew Brzezinski (former national security advisor to Jimmy Carter), Joseph Nye (theorist of "soft power"), Madeline Albright, Colin Powell, Richard Holbrooke, Strobe Talbott, Fouad Ajami (who was part of the Bush inner circle that framed the response to 9/11),[57] and others such as neocon Elliott Abrams, who is a senior fellow. While CFR veers toward the realist side, neocon views are represented within it. Similarly, another influential think tank, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), includes realists like Sam Nunn, David Abshire, Richard Armitage, Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, and Joseph Nye as well as neocons like Zalmay Khalilzad.

It should therefore come as no surprise that these individuals talk to one another and vie for influence within the broader political arena. When they disagree it is typically around strategy or rhetoric, not the overall aim of maintaining US hegemony. For instance, back in the 1950s when the Orientalists were arguing that Islam and communism were incompatible (as discussed in chapter 4), the newly formed CFR (founded in 1954) took a position against this thesis. Its Middle East strategist at the time wrote that "Islam cannot be counted on to serve as such a barrier

[to the USSR]. The theory that communism and Soviet influence could never make inroads in the Moslem world because they are materialistic and atheistic has not been borne out. Religion does have a significant place in Middle Eastern society. It colors both popular and official attitudes. But it does not establish absolute immunity to a political virus such as fascism or communism."[58] In short, CFR offered a realist view of how the United States might maintain its power in the Middle East. This is a difference of strategy, not of goals and outcomes.

The first "humanitarian" mission of the 1990s was Clinton's continuation of George H.W. Bush's Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1993. UN troops, under the leadership of the United States, were sent to address the food crisis and feed the hungry—yet the troops arrived months after those most threatened by hunger had already died of starvation. While the United States and United Nations justified the invasion on humanitarian grounds, US interests in Somalia's geostrategic location and oil resources played a more significant role in the Americans' decision to intervene. When eighteen US soldiers were killed in the now-famous Black Hawk Down incident, US troops departed and left the East African nation worse off than when they arrived.[59] This intervention prefigured what was to come. Despite this, liberals provided cover for Clinton's "humanitarianism." Former leftists like Christopher Hitchens, Paul Berman, and Michael Ignatieff cheered on this new imperialism, as did New Left icons like Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

In Iraq the United States (via the UN) imposed a draconian sanctions regime that kept Iraq's economy close to the preindustrial state in which allied bombing had left it in 1991. The Clinton administration repeatedly stated that sanctions were meant to target Saddam Hussein's regime and not the Iraqi people. The reality, however, was that ordinary Iraqis suffered most. More than a million died. When Albright was asked by Lesley Stahl on CBS's *60 Minutes* in 1996 about half a million dead Iraqi children, she replied, "We think the price is worth it."[60] Thus, the humanitarians were quite content to carry out their foreign policy agenda on the dead bodies of children.

Of course, the United States did not intervene in every humanitarian crisis—the most famous case being the Rwandan genocide. Nor would the Clinton administration truly adopt multilateralism. For instance, the United States refused to sign an agreement supported by a majority of the world's countries to ban the use of antipersonnel landmines. Neither

did the Clinton administration always seek the consent of the UN Security Council before waging war—the NATO-led war on Serbia in 1999 was carried out without UN authorization. Similarly, Clinton did not go through UN channels before bombing Iraq (with British help) in 1998. Phyllis Bennis shows convincingly that even while Clinton used the rhetoric of "assertive multilateralism," he employed Bush-style unilateralism well before 9/11. She adds that he cynically used the UN to provide "multilateral cover" for US goals, and that Clinton's "humanitarian interventions" were in reality a disguise for "unilateral militarism."[61]

Despite this, the neocons continued to maintain their ideological differences with Clinton, writing several critiques of his foreign policy. In 1996 Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan published an important essay in *Foreign Affairs* titled "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy." Rejecting balance-of-power realism, they argued that "in a world in which peace and American security depend on American power and the will to use it, the main threat the United States faces now and in the future is its own weakness. American hegemony is the only reliable defense against a breakdown of peace and international order. The appropriate goal of American foreign and defense policy, therefore, is to preserve that hegemony as far into the future as possible."[62] This "neo-Reaganite" policy was called "benevolent global hegemony" because it asserted that what was good for the United States was generally good for the world as well. As an aside, we might note that this was not a radically new idea, given the concept of "benevolent supremacy" or Luce's post–World War II–era "American Century" (discussed in chapter 4). What *was* new in the late 1990s was the willingness among the adherents of this policy to use the word "empire" more openly.[63] The rhetorical reticence of the postwar era had finally faded away.

While one might argue that Clinton's vision was not so different from the neocons', it was, at least, packaged in more sophisticated language. As Maria Ryan writes, there was

> significant convergence between the neoconservative objectives and those of the Clinton administration. To be sure, the language some of the neocons used was more explicit. They openly prioritized the credibility of NATO and were frank about why a US and NATO victory was important. Clinton presented a softer image, claiming he was also motivated by humanitarian considerations—and perhaps he was—but even for Clinton humanitarianism alone was not enough to compel intervention.[64]

Toward the end of the 1990s, his administration stated that the United States was an "indispensable nation" and that because of its unmatched power and its values it could "stand taller and see farther" than others. Therefore its dominance of the world was necessarily benign: it was not based on coercion but rather on the attractiveness of American values, commodities, and popular culture.[65] This is what Joseph Nye refers to as "soft power." (Nye served in the Clinton administration and is on the board of the CFR.) While they might quibble over the details, this vision of US dominance is shared by all segments of the policy establishment.

September 11 and the Bush Doctrine

Almost immediately after 9/11, the Bush administration started to look for ways to attack Iraq. As Richard Clarke, then "counterterrorism czar," reveals in his book *Against All Enemies*, President Bush took a few people aside and said to them: "I know you have a lot to do and all . . . but I want you, as soon as you can, to go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way."[66] This effort to target Iraq was part of the larger neocon strategy of destabilizing the Middle East. The Bush Doctrine, as it came to be known, laid out in the National Security Strategy document released in 2002 enshrined neoconservative foreign policy.

The key element of the Bush Doctrine was that it proclaimed the United States' unilateral right to wage preventive war—to attack another sovereign nation not because it directly threatened the United States but because it could *potentially* pose a threat. It gave the president discretion to determine what constituted a threat. Thus, if a nation "harbored terrorists," developed weapons of mass destruction, or otherwise acted in ways that went against the United States' interests, it would be subject to attack and invasion. Another key aspect of the Bush Doctrine was the imperative to put down the rise of any rival that might challenge US hegemony. The NSS document states: "Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States."[67] This translated into US military presence in the Middle East and Central Asia, considered "hot spots" due to their oil and natural gas resources as well as their closeness to potential rivals like China, India, and Russia. The US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were designed to accomplish both of the aforementioned aims: to put down potential threats and dissuade potential adversaries. The Bush regime had hoped that after Iraq, it would go on to carry out regime change in Iran and Syria. With the region under its control, the United States could then dictate terms to the other powers that rely on Middle East oil, particularly China.

The leaked Wolfowitz DPG report from the early 1990s—the report so roundly scorned by the policy establishment—was now being put into practice against the backdrop of the tragedy of 9/11. The neocons, as well as others sympathetic to their vision, understood the historic opportunity the 9/11 attacks presented. Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser and later secretary of state, put it succinctly when she said: "I think this period is analogous to 1945 to 1947 in that the events . . . started shifting the tectonic plates in international politics. And it's important to seize on that and position American interests and institutions before they harden again."[68] Yet capitalizing on this opportunity to realize the neocon vision also meant orchestrating an elaborate public relations campaign designed to elicit public support and stifle criticism. Enter the War on Terror and the language of Islamophobia.

Stephen Sheehi points out that the rhetorical response to 9/11 was worked out by a group of academics, journalists, policy makers, and experts who were invited to strategy sessions at the White House. As Wolfowitz explained, "The US government, especially the Pentagon, is incapable of producing the kinds of ideas and strategy needed to deal with a crisis of the magnitude of 9/11."[69] Among those invited to help in generating the appropriate public response were Bernard Lewis, journalist and former *Newsweek* editor Fareed Zakaria, and Johns Hopkins professor Fouad Ajami, as well as several neocons.

Sheehi points to the different approaches Lewis and Zakaria take. He writes that if "Lewis locates the failures of Islam within the barbarism of the 'Arab mind,' then Zakaria locates the hate for the West in the failure of Arab political culture and economic organization."[70] Zakaria, a student of Samuel Huntington, has argued that the United States should promote free markets and democracy in the Middle East, channeling his mentor's modernization proclivities. He states that Arabs have seen the "reverse of the historical process in the Western world, where liberalism produced democracy and democracy fuels liberalism. The Arab path has produced dictatorship, which has bred terrorism."[71] In this view, the United States therefore had to intervene to carry the "white man's burden" and bring

democracy and neoliberalism. This is Clinton-style liberal imperialism. Lewis, on the other hand, has always taken a harder line and in this sense is more closely aligned with the neocons. It is therefore not surprising that the neocons would turn to Lewis to provide the intellectual ballast needed to justify their foreign policy; as Danny Cooper puts it, the neocons "lionize Lewis."[72] Also, according to Bob Woodward, Lewis was "a Cheney favorite," and Cheney used Lewis's academic credentials and credibility repeatedly to justify his own policy positions.[73]

The "clash of civilizations" rhetoric therefore became dominant in the aftermath of 9/11 and was the ideological basis for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well domestic attacks on Muslims and Arabs. For a while it appeared that the neocons were unstoppable—but they overplayed their hand. During its first term, the Bush administration built a "coalition of the willing" to invade Iraq, rejecting criticisms from allies it derogatorily labeled "old Europe." The war on Iraq, however, did not go the way the neocons wanted it to. Instead of greeting US forces as liberators, the Iraqi people resisted and rejected US hegemony. The plan to carry out regime change in Iran and Syria was halted; if anything, Iran was strengthened by the United States' actions. Not only was the neocon vision of a new Middle East in jeopardy, but the United States had alienated its former allies in Europe and strengthened China (as well as Russia and Venezuela). This prompted an about-face in the Bush administration's policies, which moved toward the use of more multilateral tactics. Additionally, the administration moved away from "hard" power (such as the use of coercion and bribery) and toward winning "hearts and minds," as represented in the counterinsurgency strategy championed by its military commander in Afghanistan, General David Petraeus.

The military's 2006 "counterinsurgency manual" laid out how soft power would be used in the battlefield. In the foreword, Petraeus, noting that it had been twenty years since the US military had produced a field manual specifically on counterinsurgency, articulated this new doctrine as follows:

> A counterinsurgency campaign is, as described in this manual, a mix of offensive, defensive, and stability operations conducted along multiple lines of operations. It requires Soldiers and Marines to employ a mix of familiar combat tasks and skills more often associated with nonmilitary agencies. The balance between them depends on the local situation. Achieving this balance is not easy. It requires leaders at all levels to adjust their approach constantly. They must ensure that their Soldiers and Marines are ready to be greeted with either a handshake or a hand grenade. . . . Soldiers and Marines are expected to be *nation builders as well as warriors*. They must be prepared to help reestablish institutions and local security forces and assist in rebuilding infrastructure and basic services. They must be able to facilitate establishing local governance and the rule of law. The list of such tasks is long; performing them involves extensive coordination and cooperation with many intergovernmental, host-nation, and international agencies.[74] [emphasis added]

In short, it wasn't enough simply to kill and militarily defeat the enemy; soldiers needed to take part in building infrastructure, providing basic services, and being both "nation builders and warriors." To aid this effort, the following year the Pentagon recruited anthropologists through a forty-million-dollar program called the "Human Terrain System." It sent these anthropologists to Iraq and Afghanistan to gather cultural information in order to better prosecute the War on Terror. They stated their goal clearly: "Empathy will become a weapon."[75] Thus, the United States was following in the footsteps long ago blazed by Napoleon in trying to accumulate knowledge to use in controlling colonized populations ideologically.

By the end of Bush's second term, however, the failing occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq—as well as an economic crisis of proportions not seen since the Great Depression—meant that it was time for a changing of the guard. Obama was voted into power by an electorate disgusted by the hubris and arrogance of the Bush regime. The ruling elite also gave him their blessing, hoping to put a friendlier face on US imperialism. The other team of imperialists was ready with a plan to rehabilitate the global image of American empire.

Obama and Liberal Imperialism

In January 2007, a leadership group on US-Muslim relations headed by Madeleine Albright, Richard Armitage (former deputy secretary of state under George W. Bush), several academics like Vali Nasr and Jessica Stern, and Muslim Americans like Daisy Khan and Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf (of Cordoba House fame), produced a document titled "Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World." This document

received high praise from political figures like Senator Dick Lugar, Congressman Howard Berman, and Leon Panetta (soon to be CIA director and eventually secretary of defense), as well as former generals like Anthony Zinni.[76] In its opening pages, it stated that distrust of the United States in Muslim-majority countries was the product of "policies and actions—not a clash of civilizations." It went on to argue that to defeat "violent extremists," military force was necessary but not sufficient, and that the United States needed to forge "diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural initiatives." The report urged the US leadership to improve "mutual respect and understanding between Americans and Muslims," promote better "governance and improve civic participation," and help "catalyze job-creating growth" in Muslim countries. This was a return to Clintonian liberal imperialism, with its emphasis on diplomacy and markets. The report's call to action stated that it would be vital for the next president to talk about improving relations with Muslim-majority countries in his or her inaugural speech and to reaffirm the United States' "commitment to prohibit all forms of torture."

Who better than Barack Obama to sell this new rhetorical posture? Indeed, in his inaugural address Obama did precisely as the policy group's document suggested. In one of his first speeches, in Cairo, Obama even rejected the "clash of civilizations" argument, emphasizing the shared common history and aspirations of the East and West. Whereas the "clash" discourse sees the West and the world of Islam as mutually exclusive and as polar opposites, Obama emphasized "common principles." He spoke of "civilization's debt to Islam," which "pav[ed] the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment," and acknowledged Muslims' contributions to the development of science, medicine, navigation, architecture, calligraphy, and music. This was no doubt a remarkable admission for an American president, but one that Obama clearly saw as vital to bolstering the United States' badly damaged image in the "Muslim world."[77] Indeed, this speech marked a significant rhetorical shift from the Bush era.

It was, however, consistent with the line argued by liberal imperialists. As Joseph Nye put it in *Foreign Affairs*:

> The current struggle against Islamist terrorism is much less a clash of civilizations than an ideological struggle within Islam. The United States cannot win unless the Muslim mainstream wins. There is very little likelihood that people like Osama bin Laden can ever be won over with soft power: hard power is needed to deal with such cases. But there is enormous diversity of opinion in the Muslim world. Many Muslims disagree with American values as well as American policies, but that does not mean that they agree with bin Laden. The United States and its allies cannot defeat Islamist terrorism if the number of people the extremists are recruiting is larger than the number of extremists killed or deterred. Soft power is needed to reduce the extremists' numbers and win the hearts and minds of the mainstream.[78]

The Obama era therefore came to be characterized by a shift to liberal imperialism and *liberal Islamophobia*. The key characteristics of liberal Islamophobia are the rejection of the "clash of civilizations" thesis, the recognition that there are "good Muslims" with whom diplomatic relations can be forged, and a concomitant willingness to work with moderate Islamists. Liberal Islamophobia may be rhetorically gentler than conservative Islamophobia and (as we will see in chapter 10) the language of the "Islamophobic warriors," but it is nonetheless racist and imperialist in that it takes for granted the "white man's burden." It doesn't occur to the likes of Nye, Albright, and Haass that it is for ordinary people in the Middle East to make decisions about their societies. Self-determination does not enter their framework—and "benevolent supremacy" remains unquestioned.

Obama's policy marks a shift to the realist tradition of great power geopolitics. As he himself put it, "The truth is that my foreign policy is actually a return to the traditional bipartisan realistic policy of George Bush's father, of John F. Kennedy, and in some ways of Ronald Reagan."[79] Thus, instead of breaking from the imperial consensus or the policies of Bush's second term, Obama adopted them. Since taking office, as of this writing, he has deployed thirty thousand more troops to Afghanistan, expanded the war into Pakistan (via the "Af-Pak" strategy), tried to bully Iraq into granting an extension of the US occupation (which failed), carried out drone attacks and "black ops" in Yemen and Somalia, and participated in the NATO war on a former ally in Libya, Muammar Gaddafi. This should not come as a surprise, since his inaugural staff included Bush personnel like defense secretary Bob Gates and General David Petraeus, as well as Democratic Party hawks like Hillary Clinton and Joseph Biden. Obama's strategy consisted of a return to multilateralism, using multilateral institutions to incorporate and subordinate international and regional rivals. In his 2010 National Security Strategy document, he argued that the United States should focus its

"engagement on strengthening international institutions and galvanizing the collective action that can serve common interests such as combating violent extremism; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials; achieving balanced and sustainable economic growth; and forging cooperative solutions to the threat of climate change, conflict, and pandemic disease."[80] Yet despite this multilateral strategy, the Obama administration still resorted to unilateral actions when needed—the assassination of Osama Bin Laden, for example—as well as to bilateral agreements. Obama's vision was to secure, through this strategy of engagement, a world order under the United States' management and in its interests.

In practice, this didn't go very smoothly. The NATO intervention in Afghanistan began to lose its multilateral character, as various European nations started pulling out their forces in response to domestic opposition. By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, the "hearts and minds" approach and the counterinsurgency strategy had more or less failed. Obama therefore had to return to counterterrorism and say "good-bye to nation building and counter-insurgency operations."[81] The failure of the Bush policies he was pursuing ushered in a new phase in Obama's imperial strategy.

In 2012, Obama's Defense Strategic Guidance document, titled "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," refocused US foreign policy and its military structure.[82] It made clear that the United States will continue to fight against "violent extremists," even though the assassination of bin Laden has diminished al-Qaeda. As the report states, "its affiliates remain active in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere"; the US military will "monitor" these groups and strike "the most dangerous groups and individuals when necessary."[83] In short, Obama would continue the War on Terror on nonstate actors through surveillance, but also through drone attacks and the use of Special Operations Forces.

The guidance document, however, refocuses attention on the Asia-Pacific area and names China and Iran as state actors that need to be contained. To deter and contain China, the United States will work with its "network of allies and partners."[84] Bypassing its long-term ally Pakistan, the document names India as furthering US aims in Asia. In a similar vein, the document also turns to allies in the Middle East, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council nations, to "prevent Iran's development

of a nuclear weapon capability and counter its destabilizing policies."[85] Needless to say, it affirms the administration's commitment to "Israel's security and a comprehensive Middle East peace." Finally, it turns to its European allies and NATO to take on a greater share of the burden of maintaining global security, so that the United States may not only move some its of forces from Europe but also downsize its military.

The Obama administration has learned that interventions such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan are the wrong ways to project US power. As Obama notes in his preface to the guidance document, we will remember "the lessons of history and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past when our military was left ill prepared for the future. As we end today's wars and reshape our Armed Forces, we will ensure that our military is agile, flexible, and ready for the full range of contingencies."[86] The document continues, "U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations."[87] Instead, the political class seems to have drawn the lesson that the way to achieve its objectives is through missions like the NATO intervention into Libya, which involved air power and relied on local allies on the ground. In sum, the new phase of Obama's imperial posture involves reestablishing US hegemony in Asia (preventing the rise of China) and in the Middle East (containing Iran) through multilateral alliances and the use of air strikes, drone attacks, and counterterrorism and special operations forces as well as cyber warfare. Despite the right's charge that Obama is a "secret Muslim agent" working on behalf of foreign governments, he is in reality a liberal imperialist at the helm of a nation that is trying to reassert its domination in an increasingly multipolar world.

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In this chapter I looked at US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War and traced the evolution of the "Islamic threat." As we saw, even though the language of "Islamic terrorism" was in development through a collaborative engagement between the neocons (and Lewis) and their Likud counterparts in Israel since the late 1970s, it was not until the events of 9/11 that this rhetoric became the United States' dominant means of justifying its imperialism. The implosion of the Bush regime then saw the baton handed over to the liberal imperialists, who instituted a rhetorical shift and continued the multilateral strategies adopted in Bush's second term to project and maintain US hegemony. Correspond-

ingly, conservative Islamophobia gave way to liberal Islamophobia. This did not, however, change the realities of people's lives in the "Muslim world," which in some ways got worse under Obama. This is true, too, of the domestic environment for Muslims in the United States, a topic I turn to in the next chapter.

Section 3

Islamophobia and Domestic Politics