

***American Foreign Policy towards Iraq, Iran and North Korea: American  
Hegemony and Neo-conservatism against the Axis of Evil***

***by***

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***Abstract***

*This article analyzes the United States toward "axis of evil" countries, namely Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Since September 11, 2001, according to George Walker Bush, these countries are sponsor of terror that threat America or friend's and allies' of America with weapons of mass destruction.*

*Keywords: United States of America, Foreign Policy, Axis of Evil.*

**Background of the Study**

Five of the most important issues raised by current events or by various critics of established approaches: international terrorism, the environment, gender, sovereignty and the changes in statehood involving new security challenges (Jackson and Sorensen, 2007: 249). Then, the important actors in IR (International Relations) are states (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2008: 12). The international system is the set of relationships among the world's states, structured according to certain rules and patterns of interaction. The action of a state in the international arena result from individual human choices by its citizenry, its political leaders, its diplomats and bureaucrats aggregated through the state's internal structures. The study of foreign policy concentrates on forces within the state, its main emphasis is on the individual and domestic levels of analysis. The domestic level of analysis concerns the aggregations of individuals within states that influence state actions in the International arena.

National governments maybe the most important actors in IR, but they are strongly influenced by a variety of non-state actors. The terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, and the reshaping of the strategic

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landscape in the twenty-first century created complex challenges and dilemmas for the United States. The challenge came not only from within the established international order, but also from international terrorist (non-state actors).

Actually, as the twenty-first century began, the United States was the world's sole superpower, with the world's largest economy, most powerful military, and most influential social and cultural outlooks (O'Connor and Sabato, 2004:784). Even so, it faced significant foreign and military policy challenges. The September 11, 2001, attacks magnified two challenges above all others, homeland defense and fighting a global war on terrorism. These two challenges required additional security measures at home, military action overseas, more cooperative intelligence with allies, coalition diplomacy with virtually everyone, and eliminating terrorist access to financial institutions.

President George Walker Bush through the promulgation of a broader approach to the issue of the state sponsorship of terrorism in his January 2002 State of the Union Address. In the wake of the liquidation of the Al-Qaida-sponsoring Taliban regime in Afghanistan through the successful completion of Operation Enduring Freedom the previous month, Bush used the address to impress upon those states with a history of support for terrorism that the United States would not tolerate such behavior. In particular, the president characterized three states (Iraq, Iran and North Korea) as members of "an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world" (Pauly, JR, and Lansford, 2005: 8). Furthermore, he referred explicitly to the threats posed by states determined to develop WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) and maintain relationship with terrorists, including, but not limited to, bin Laden and his global network, concluding that Iraq, Iran and North Korea "pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic" (Pauly, JR, 2005: 6). Essentially, that address provided the rhetorical foundation for the planning and prosecution of the Second Iraq War.

The common principle of the "axis of evil" was that all three regimes were

tyrannical, dangerous and illegitimate (Renshon and Suedfeld, 2007: 4). What to do about them is quite another matter. President Bush has invaded Iraq, support six-nation talks with North Korea, and deferred to the European Union lead in referring Iran to the United Nations for its clandestine efforts to develop nuclear weapons. The reasons for the separate policies are to be found in their different strategic circumstances and the nature of the problem in each of the three countries.

Iran is coming of age in the international system and is now rapidly growing into a regional superpower in the strategically important Middle East (Davies, 2008: 209). The speed with which Iran's economic and military power has increase has led to a more assertive foreign policy which seems destined to lead to fiercer resistance toward the United States. This new assertiveness combined with the development of a domestic nuclear program and a U.S. President who is willing to use force in the international arena is a potentially combustible mix beside that according to Roskin and Coyle (2008:331) Washington is also totally against Iran getting nukes, which would make it the regional power. Pentagon officials worry Iran could also pass on a nuclear device to Hezbollah's or other extremist for another, bigger 9/11.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) commonly known as North Korea, according to Hymans (2008:259) undermines two common assumptions about the DPRK nuclear threat: first, that the North Korean leadership's nuclear intentions are a measured response to the external environment, and second, that the DPRK has developed enough technical capacity to go nuclear whenever it pleases. In place of these assumptions puts forth the general theoretical hypotheses that (1) the decision to go nuclear is rarely if ever based on typical cost-benefit analysis, and instead reflects deep-stated national identity conceptions, and (2) the capacity to nuclear depends not only on raw levels of industrialization and nuclear technology, but also on the state's organizational acumen.

According to Adam Quinn from University of Leicester (2008:44) most international relations (IR) theories concerned with power balancing would

suggest that such a vision for the future, universal Great-Power cooperation under the auspices of American hegemonic power is ideologically confused and impracticable. The Bush strategy seems to suggest that common interests and values will overcome any temptation other powers have to balance against America. Yet the disputatious nature of the administration's relations with most other powers throughout the implementation of its policy illustrates the vulnerability of any plan based on such an assumption.

### **Definition**

In order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion when reading this study and to clarify the purpose of this study, the researcher has provided the meanings of the terms used in this study:

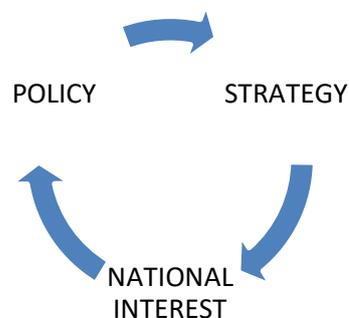
- a. Three countries are Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Bush's goal (according to Bush) is to prevent regimes (terrorist) that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens - leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.
- b. The "axis of evil" countries is a term coined by United States President George W. Bush in his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002 in order to describe governments that he accused of helping terrorism and

seeking weapons of mass destruction. President Bush named Iran, Iraq, and North Korea in his speech. President Bush's presidency has been marked by this notion as a justification for the War on Terror.

### Analysis

This research is based on Bush's administration towards "axis of evil" countries. The Bush administration to describe "the policy that nations harboring terrorists would be treated as if they were guilty of terrorists acts" (Renshon and Suedfeld, 2007: 39). The United States appealed to arguments which suggested its actions, by addressing a real threat centering on WMD and terrorism, furthered the common interest of all the Great Power. In practice, however, almost all those power lined up to criticize and obstruct American effort to assemble a coalition for invasion. This highlighted an age-old, perhaps inherent, problem at the heart of any agenda based on the pursuit of assumedly common interests: the national interests, while they may be asserted, in the language of generalities, to be common, cannot be defined with sufficient objectivity to guarantee agreement on policy in concrete cases. Hence a nation may find itself unilaterally acting to defend, as it argues it, the interests of other powers, through actions which those very same powers themselves oppose. As U.S. policy twisted itself into this precarious ideological poise, the Iraq debate inevitably became concentrated not on the shared values and interests of all nations but on the undesirable qualities of American hegemony.

This following chart is used to explain the problem statement :



The new world order and the new war have created a great deal about the meaning of US policy and national (grand) strategy. Palmer noted:

The term “strategy,” derived from the ancient Greek, originally pertained to the art of generalship or high command. In modern times, “grand strategy” has come into use to describe the overall defense plans of a nation or coalition of nations. Since the mid-twentieth century, “national strategy” has attained wide usage, meaning the coordinated employment of the total resources of a nation to achieve its national objectives (Sarkesian and Connor, JR, 2006: 122).

But other definition, the strategy insisted that:

Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threat, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversary’s choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first (Bellamy, etc, 2008:117).

Grand strategy is the usual label given to the way a state intends to pursue its national interest. From this a number of other strategies are designed that are focused on specific region or issues. Thus, there is military strategy, economic strategy, political strategy, psychological strategy. Policy refers to goals, strategy is the means to reach these goals.

US national interests are expressions of major US policy objectives projected into the international arena.

We must recognize that America does indeed have national interests in the world, including an extremely important interest in the sturdy legitimacy of the international system as it change over time...This does not imply that American global hegemony is needed now or in the future- as it was needed to deal with the

global Soviet military threat throughout the Cold War. Instead, we need to be both precise and clear about our national interests as the twin military and geopolitical transformations remake the international order (Sarkesian and Connor, JR, 2006: 100).

The purpose of these interests includes the creation and perpetuation of an international environment that is not inimical (antagonistic) to the peaceful pursuit of American values. It follows that such interests are those that nurture and expand democracy and open systems. Conversely, these interests are those that prevent the expansion of closed system using force or indirect aggressive means. But all national interests do not automatically translate into vital interests and therefore into a national security concern that is, a situation where military involvement must be contemplated and perhaps undertaken.

As stated, at the core of US national interest is the survival of the homeland and the American political order. But survival cannot be limited to the final defense of the homeland. In light of today's weapons technology, ideological imperatives and international terrorism, among other things, the concept of survival of the homeland means more than retreating to the borders of the United States and threatening total destruction of any who attack.

If national interest is invoked only in those cases where the homeland is directly threatened and its survival is at stake, then the concept is of little use. Indeed, it may be too late if Americans wait until survival is at stake. If the concept of national security is to have any meaning in terms of policy and strategy, then it must mean something more than survival of the American homeland. It is interpretation and application of this broader view that spark a great deal of debate and disagreement between the Executive and Legislative branches of government and between varieties of groups in the American political arena, including the media.

A useful way to try to distinguish the various elements in the concept of national interests is to view these from the perspective of priorities: core (first order), contiguous (second order) and outer (third order). In the concept of new

war following 9/11 the distinction between these various interests has considerably blurred. Third order interests may at some point move quickly into first-order interests as international terrorists as well as non-state actors are seen as immediate challenges to US national interests. Many point to the US invasion of Iraq as an example of such a phenomenon.

*First Order: vital interests*

Protection of the homeland, and areas and issues directly affecting this priority, requires a total military mobilization and resource commitment of the nation's total effort. Now this also includes homeland security and increasingly involves private security firms as well as National Guard and Reserve forces.

*Second Order: Critical Interests*

These are areas and interests that do not directly affect the country's survival, but in the long run have a high propensity for becoming first-order priorities. In the immediate period, these have a direct influence on first order priorities. Such interests are measured primarily by the degree to which they maintain, nurture and expand open systems. Military force may be the instrument of choice, but not necessarily the only instrument.

*Third Order: Serious Interests*

These are areas and issues that do not seriously affect first- and second-order interests, but do cast some shadow over such interests. US efforts are focused on creating favorable conditions to preclude such issues from developing into higher-order ones. Unfavorable third-order interests serve as a warning to second-order interests. Variety of non-military instruments are probably the most appropriate (Sarkesian and Connor, JR, 2006: 122).

All other interests are peripheral in that they are placed on a watch list. This means there is no immediate impact on any order of interests, but these matters should be watched in case events raise them to a higher order. In the meantime, these peripheral interests require few if any US resources. Nonetheless, as 9/11 showed, peripheral interests can quickly become first order interests. This requires close and reasonably accurate intelligence assessments of the strategic landscape in the current period.

American values as they apply to the external world are at the core of national interests. National interests do not mean that US strategy is limited to the immediate homeland of the United States. These require power projection into various parts of the world. National interests and national security are closely linked. But these interests must be differentiated in terms of vital (core) and other interests. This should be the critical aspect of national security. The president is the focal point in defining and articulating American national interests because president is the dominant actor in American foreign policy (Janda, dkk, 2000: 669). To do this effectively, the President must demonstrate leadership and understanding of the domestic and international setting. There must be a degree of consensus between the American public and national leaders regarding when national interests demand the use of military force.

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