

Final Paper

America's 20th-century rise into the world's only global superpower, steadfastly committed to the values of liberal democracy – in the Cold War and post-Cold War eras, has posed interesting questions as to whether it has the right, or perhaps the responsibility, to defend, promote, and/or impose its system of government in parts of the world where it is lacking. Since the time of Theodore Roosevelt, the understanding that liberal democracy is the core necessity for the stability and flourishing of any country has become an indispensable aspect of the idealistic counterpart of American foreign policy. In the process of two world wars and a cold war after them, American statesmen, however, understood that the second counterpart of the equation – self-interest – is equally indispensable. When applied to the right circumstances, using the right means, the variables of the equation have come to terms with each other and have both elevated international recognition of American efforts, brought peace and stability to areas where democracy was supposedly inapplicable, and helped address inflamed internal ambiguities in American society. That equation had its failures, too. Then internal societal division and external accusations have surged to question not only America's genuine commitment to securing peace in areas where it intervenes militarily, but to question the desirability of liberal democracy itself and its applicability to non-Western societies. Based on the notion that opposing versions on the application of the belief in American exceptionalism *within* American society produce the most dangerous fluctuations in its foreign policy course, this paper will try to make the case that democracy, indeed stable and liberal democracy, is possible and desirable anywhere in the world and procrastination due to a misguided Western haughtiness, and not

preemption against rogue states, is likely to constitute the most serious threat in the future.

In order to be able to intelligently assess the present, any foreign policy analysis of current issues should turn its sight to the past where failures and triumphs alike offer ample lessons.

If there is any foreign policy paradigm whose inapplicability in the contemporary world might go unquestioned, undoubtedly that is the isolationism that dominated the formative period of American diplomatic endeavors. The world and the way international relations are conducted have fundamentally changed since the Revolution. So has America's role in this world. From a young and inexperienced, but determined confederation of heterogeneous states, it has grown into the world's sole dominating power in almost every aspect of life. It exerts influence in every important region of the world, as much as every important region of the world exerts influence on it. In these constant interactions in the highly globalized world, isolationism in the sense of steering clear of entangling alliances and lapsing into narcissistic contemplation of American exceptionalism will prove as dangerous as overextension, if not even more. There is, however, an important aspect of American diplomacy in the formative period, which no American president would do wrong to follow. Being humble and accurately assessing the limits of your capabilities, shrewdly taking advantage of the inconsistencies in your rivals' policies can be as helpful to the world hegemon in the beginning of the 21st century as it was to a new-born state in the end of the 18th.

The chief lesson that in retrospect emerges from the aftermath of World War I is that post-war peace settlements need not only verbal commitments, even though dressed in the becoming form of lofty phrases in lengthy documents, but decisive enforcing through military commitments. As compelling and ennobling as president Wilson's vision of mutual security, international cooperation, self-determination and end of all wars was, the failure of the League of Nations in the 1920s and 1930s proved that very often idealistic principles need practical application that might seem unwarranted, arrogant or simply wrong, but is the only way of keeping America's commitments which, in the end, are derived from the same belief that Wilson held of America's mission to bring peace and democracy where there had been only injustice and oppression.

A complexity of failures, including the United States' failure to live up to its new role as a superpower, brought about World War II and, though cynical it may sound, a chance to rectify the mistakes. The post-World War II settlement ranks as America's foreign policy number one achievement in nation-building up to date. The successful reemergence of Germany and Japan as top economically developed countries with stable democratic systems and governments opposed to war as way of settling international disputes has been repeated as a mantra throughout the Cold War and indeed until today. While the success is undoubtedly visible, the price at which it was achieved, the time and effort it took with regard to military and financial commitment, pose an explicable uncertainty, and sometimes outright opposition, as to whether the United States will be able to sustain similar commitments in an increasing number of regions in the world, regions far less propitious for the spread of democracy than Japan and Germany were. Even in the presence of broad domestic consensus over this issue, which is not the case, American foreign policy should be highly selective in its assessment of "vital" geopolitical regions, in its effort to re-shape them to match its security and moral considerations. In this event, one of the most useful lessons of the post-World War II settlement will be the establishment of NATO-type defense alliances and gradual withdrawal of American dominance in favor of the regional actors, especially in the solving of regional issues, given, of course, evidence that these regional actors are capable of handling the situation themselves.

The Cold War, particularly American involvement in Korea, Vietnam, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and other places, offers other useful insights, as well. The events in these regions, fundamentally different from Western Europe and Japan, are helpful in analyzing the different paradigms proposed by different American presidents and administrations for handling the rivalry with the Soviet Union and the impact of these policies on American public opinion.

The three foreign policy paradigms were practiced by Nixon, Carter and Reagan and the irresolvable tension between them sprang from what Henry Kissinger calls the "most ambiguous moral challenge" – the Vietnam War. He attributes a lot of the difficulties that Nixon faced in resolving the Vietnam crisis to the destruction of the bipartisan consensus that dominated the American public debate in the first decades of

the Cold War. According to Kissinger, the primary blame for the loss of that consensus lies within the members of previous presidential administrations (Johnson's and, to a certain extent, Kennedy's) who turned away from statesmanship responsibility and joined the ranks of the radical protesters against the war. Kissinger gives a lot of credit to the way Nixon steered the United States' disentanglement from Vietnam, faced with the attitudes of utter social division, disillusionment and uncertainty.

In the same circumstances of a fundamental change in American society that was brought about by Vietnam, Nixon, much to his credit again, saw the necessity of a new approach to foreign policy that would help alleviate the exacerbation over the highly divisive issues of the costly stalemate. That new approach, labeled *détente* and devised with the assistance of Kissinger, was a less expensive, more moderate, stripped of ideological rationale, version of the containment strategy, practiced in the first decades of the Cold War. The unwarranted, as it later proved to be, hope was that removing the moralistic dimension from American foreign policy and the ideological dimension from international politics will make the world a more predictable place, where states act in the name of their geostrategic interests. *Détente* also gave hope that, because the Soviet Union was not exclusively driven by its ideological goal to achieve the triumph of communism over capitalism, but in effect practiced a foreign policy very much in the legacy of the Russian czars, a less costly and more stable equilibrium could be reached through reasonable negotiations.

A major achievement of *détente* is the rapprochement with China, which was again based on the belief that regime type and ideology didn't matter and, consequently, inevitable conflict between the Soviet Union and China was bound to appear because of their conflicting geopolitical interests. Nixon's "triangular policy" aptly exploited the Sino-Soviet split to the success of the American position in East Asia.

The underlying notion that regime type doesn't matter enforced another trend visible in the foreign policy of Nixon and Kissinger – the support of far right-wing and often repressive authoritarian regimes in Third World countries, if it was in the US national interest. This traditionalistic balance-of-power approach proved insufficient for its time. The attempted warm-up of US-Soviet relations coincided with a huge military build-up by the Soviet Union, which had started in the 1960s and would continue into the

1980s, discrediting the fundamental premise that ideology was not an intrinsically driving force of Soviet foreign policy.

Failing to take into account the mentioned ideological element in the behavior of states, Kissinger attributes the failure of détente chiefly to the unlucky coincidence with Watergate and Nixon's personal "dearth of emotional resonance among the American people."¹ In his opinion it would have worked, if Nixon was a more charismatic figure and the Watergate scandal hadn't occurred. Kissinger is right that there is nothing wrong in the intrinsic logic of his theory, but blaming particular circumstances is not an explanation for its inapplicability to the 1970s. A more propitious period for the application of détente might be the post-Cold War world in which, not present the ideological element, a large number of states are basing their behavior in the multipolar world on traditional notions of geopolitical equilibrium. It is, however, again unclear whether détente would work in such an environment, because nowadays irrational policies find their roots in another soil – religious fundamentalism, which has supplanted the reign of communist ideology.

The continuing decline of US military power with relation to Soviet military power led the Carter administration to believe that the world is inexorably moving toward multipolarity, which the United States, having already passed its point of climatic domination, will have to adjust to. For Carter the best way for the United States to remain a major player on the international arena and increase its credibility among other nations was through re-assertion of the principal American values. His primary concern was to emphasize American commitment to expanding the rule of law and human rights in international politics and giving a more substantial role to the United Nations.

Carter's foreign policy had its biggest success in improving US relations with Third World countries, but was ultimately inappropriate for its time because it failed to devise a successful policy toward the, by no doubt, crucial threat – the Soviet Union. Carter's policy is characterized by a completely different mindset than the containment of Truman and the détente of Nixon, a mindset that didn't even perceive the Soviet Union as the chief threat and the root cause of the Cold War. The highly moralistic premises of his foreign policy led to undesirable frailty and unwillingness to respond to the nuclear build-

¹ Kissinger H. "Diplomacy", p. 731

up of the Soviet Union with respective American build-up in an attempt to escape from the vicious circle of “the arrogance of American power” that had produced disasters such as Vietnam. Unfortunately, Carter’s “unilateral forbearance” remained unilateral indeed and led to a substantial deterioration of America’s military strength. Again, aspects of Carter’s foreign policy might work better nowadays, in terms of increasing what Joseph Nye defines as America’s soft power by supporting the rule of international law and paying more attention to the allies in NATO and UN.

Without negating the moral dimension of American foreign policy, Carter’s successor Ronald Reagan practiced a much more optimistic foreign policy, characterized by a firm belief in the righteousness of the American cause and the capability of American power to sustain it by defending its enemy. Turning the Cold War into a much more understandable and appealing to the American public battle between good and evil (exemplified by his famous definition of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire”), Reagan made a powerful case for the increase in the defense budget in implementation of his Strategic Defense Initiative. A necessary component of his foreign policy strategy was the Reagan Doctrine which promised assistance to anticommunist guerrillas around the world to seize power and sever their countries from the Soviet sphere of influence. This tactic didn’t always present the United States with the most appealing choice, but in comparing the two evils in the absence of a morally justifiable democratic alternative Reagan never hesitated to choose the lesser evil and put it to work against the Soviet Union. In short term, this strategy had immense success, as is clearly identified by the indubitable defeat of the enemy, which it helped to bring about. In the long term, the backing-up of authoritarian regimes discredited America to a certain extent before its allies and gave them reason to accuse its foreign policy of hypocrisy. Although serious, this drawback, however, is by no means comparable to the measure of success the end of the Cold War represents.

Giving credit to Reagan for his foreign policy, Kissinger doesn’t omit to mention that he was to a very great extent a mere coincidence and would not have been so successful neither in the 70s before him, nor in the 90s after him. Ironically, exactly “being the right man for the right time” is the most important quality of a statesman.

Moreover, Reagan clearly understood that it was equally important to be able to translate your vision into a language understandable and acceptable to your audience.

Contrary to Fukuyama's expectation, the end of the Cold War did not signify the "end of history". The removal of a vast, heterogeneous entity as the Soviet Union caused new problems and unveiled existing ones that had been smoldering in the shadows of the titanic ideological struggle. Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations?" is one of many efforts after the end of the Cold War to predict what the new international environment will look like. Sweeping in its scope to the extent of a new theory of the historical processes that guide the development of interstate relations, it has retained outstanding resonance during the last decade, especially in the context of the surging threat of terrorism. The entrance of terrorist organizations as a shaping factor of international politics added a substantial degree of chaos, affirming Huntington's bleak suspicions of serious conflicts between civilizations based on fundamentalist premises, such as the Islamic, and civilizations, based on the rule of law and pragmatism, such as the Western. The breakdown of the Soviet Union led to the dispersion of nuclear power and its relative decline, but the most dangerous trend that follows from that was that it became more easily available to small groups of people which are not guided by the conventional restraints against the use of nuclear weapons that big states, especially superpowers, are guided by. Added to the intractable civilizational differences between Islamic and Western states, this dangerous dispersion might prove the validity of Huntington's theory, at least to a certain extent and with regard to certain civilizations.

The distinction between civilizations, proposed by Huntington, can serve as a matrix explaining the behavior of states, but other important factors of traditional diplomacy and ideology will continue to play their role. These factors will continue to shape the conduct of states in international politics within the frame of rational deliberation and, hopefully, a substantial amount of predictability. Thus, a repudiation of Huntington's theory along the lines that the world is, and will be, a chaotic place is at best too simplistic. Quite accurately he foresees the growing importance religion will acquire, with the decreased influence of ideology, as a motivating factor of states' behavior in the future decade. With the advantage of hindsight, we know that religious fundamentalism is a growing source of concern. The significant here is that this

fundamentalism is most decisively backed not only as official policy of some countries, but by self-proclaimed authorities (terrorist organizations) that do not speak for the whole population and add confusion, danger and embitterment to the anyway difficult processes of secularization.

Another issue, arising from Samuel Huntington's interesting article, is that question: if a particular civilization prevails in its dispute over another (although armed conflict, as he rightly mentions, by no means characterizes the relations between any two given civilizations all the time), doesn't that leave the door ajar for a new round of racism based on civilizational superiorities/inferiorities? Huntington's hypothesis, with its strong emphasis on "indigenization" limits to a very substantial degree the possibility of political intervention in an effort to build liberal democracy by a Western civilization state in a state belonging to any other civilization, particularly the Islamic. In this way, it questions the widespread conviction that liberal democracy, in its version established and practiced by Western-civilization countries, is the best form of government discovered up to date. Taking into account the irresolvable differences that Huntington attributes to the separate civilizations, I would presume that in his opinion a nation-building American effort in Iraq would come to no success. His theory, in my view, is valid to the extent that it specifies the possible conflicts in the future and identifies a big threat in the face of Islamic civilization states aiding terrorism, but by putting such a strong emphasis on the differences between the civilizations, it doesn't give much hope of overcoming them by establishing a Western-civilization model of democracy in Middle Eastern countries. It is a highly pessimistic theory which, if adhered to, could lead to dangerous inaction and undesirable isolationism.

In his book "The Future of Freedom" Fareed Zakaria intelligently and elegantly makes the case for liberal democracy and its ability to take root and sustain itself everywhere in the world. His arguments are moderate but convincing. He traces the history of democracy and constitutional liberalism back in history to find all the factors that have helped its firm establishment in the North Atlantic region. Carefully studying the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and authoritarian dictators in the Middle East and comparing their starting conditions with the progressing countries of East Asia, he comes to the conclusion that Arab countries are not inherently anti-secularist in nature. In fact,

he argues, with their easily acquired oil wealth they are buying the products of American economy and culture, such as McDonald's and Internet, but they fail to notice that modernization has to be brought about by a change in the fundamentals of their economic and political structures. In a very interesting way he binds the likelihood of successful democratization to the per capita GDP of a country and shows that Middle East countries, due to their vast resources, by no means lack wealth but, unfortunately, it is ill-distributed with the state taking everything. This leads to a lack of necessity of gathering taxes, which in the Western world are a tool for exacting responsibilities from governments, and paves the way for dictatorships. Giving ample examples of the rapid development and rich cultural heritage of Arab countries (Iraq is enlisted in the first place) before the rise of dictatorships, Zakaria introduces a powerful argument for the development of stable democracy in this region. He asserts that the peoples of these countries no longer want their dictators to rule over them and are in desperate need of a more moderate motivator of their lives than Islamic fundamentalism is. Having made that brilliant analysis, however, the author is not too impatient to advance the promotion of liberal democracy by the United States unexamined and unquestioned. He traces the breakdown of traditional political elites and political parties and the rise of special interests throughout the last century (and especially in the last 30 years) in the United States to show that democracy is losing its grip on American people because it has become too democratic and less liberal. The question whether a country which is faced with the fundamental task of reinvigorating its own liberal democracy has the right to impose the same imperfect species of democracy in an unstable region as the Middle East, especially by force, remains unasked and unanswered, but haunts the last pages of Zakaria's brilliant book.

Zakaria's book lays out the justification of the establishment of liberal democracy in principle. No doubt, liberal democracy is desirable and will make the world a more stable place. Zakaria believes that "no culture, no religion, no region, is inherently resistant to democracy"². He demonstrates compellingly that the development of "a genuinely entrepreneurial business class would be the single most important force for change in the Middle East." He clearly identifies the factor that impedes the Arab peoples to develop it on their own – their repressive rulers. But he does not give a prescription

² Zakaria F. "The Future of Freedom", p.81

how to act in order to establish liberal democracy in a country where a strong civil opposition toward the regime is already formed. His only advice is not to press countries into elections, lest we want a counterproductive result.

In the implementation of the ideal of spreading democracy, in the interest of both the United States and the world, particular cases will be presented where neither economic sanctions, nor verbal threats will suffice. Military action will be required – an unappealing means to achieve the shining goal. It is important to note that there will be cases when inaction will lead to more harmful effects and prolonged suffering, therefore power should not be made the last resort.

In determining where to intervene, it would be helpful for the United States to define clearly the regions of its vital geopolitical interests. This is a task of American foreign policy practitioners, but once the regions are defined and the conditions, already mentioned – a formed civil consciousness and opposition against a repressive regime which will be able to participate in the subsequent building of democracy; economic conditions indicating the existence of an environment capable of sustaining and benefiting from democracy, hardening of the position of the regime and its total unwillingness to introduce reforms – are present there, it is hard to argue that a military action, exercised in a reasonable way, can so fundamentally undermine the benefits of a stable liberal democratic regime, as to render itself utterly undesirable. It is also important to note that once the decision of military intervention is taken and the goal is defined as “establishment of a liberal democratic regime”, the United States should not abandon it halfway, thinking that removing one rogue regime cancels out the possibility of arising of another one or, for that matter, even a less repressive, but still authoritarian one. The United States should see to it that the democratic systems it creates develop in the same way they did in post-World War II Germany and Japan and serve as a firm basis for economic prosperity.

The United States, however, does not live in a world of its own. Other countries, grouped in organizations such as NATO and UN, with their own views of what is just and necessary, exist too. It is easy to enforce your opinion on countries that don't like you and which you don't like. It is much more difficult to close your eyes to the disagreements of allies. Today's world is not the 19th century balance-of-power world

where alliances were first and foremost a matter of well-calculated but not fixed and irreversible prudence. In the 21st century, America is part of a North Atlantic group of states that share a common value-system, and this is not just empty rhetoric. The painful debates within this community are indeed the most compelling proof of the commonality of their shared values. And although not paying heed to its Western European allies will by no means involve the United States into an armed dispute with them, it will be sufficient enough to undermine its soft power, as Joseph Nye convincingly defines its importance.

In his book “The Paradox of American Power”, Nye defines soft power as “the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others.” According to him, soft power is not only cultural power. Government actions and decisions also matter. Because of the enormous power the United States possesses in the eyes of the other nations, especially in the North Atlantic area, it inevitably will be judged in moral terms for its actions. Stark as this may sound, the United States has largely built this image of itself alone; therefore it has a certain responsibility to live up to it. The best places to project and sustain that image are multi-state forums, such as the United Nations and NATO. Nye proposes a few courses of action that the United States might find useful for preserving its soft power: more financial aid to underdeveloped countries; encouragement of involvement of regional actors, letting them lead where possible, as for example the role of European states in the Balkans. He quotes the words of the member of the US Department of State, Richard Haass:

Any attempt to dominate would lack domestic support and stimulate international resistance which in turn would make the costs of hegemony all the greater and its benefits all the smaller.

Nye concludes that decisive for the proper functioning of bodies, such as the Security Council of UN, is the behavior of the United States, and it should generally strive to achieve consensus before acting. He forgets that the Security Council is structured in such a way that consensus is equated with unanimity – almost impossible to achieve on security issues.

Other authors, however, are more reluctant to ascribe the responsibility for the inadequacies of mutual understanding between the United States and Western Europe to America. As Robert Kagan discusses in “Of Paradise and Power”, in the interplay of different positions and interests exists a visible exasperation on part of Western Europe over its own helplessness in situations, such as the war in Iraq. Europe’s ability to shape the course of world events is long gone, but overly proud leaders of countries that once used to be the most powerful and influential find it difficult to accept playing second fiddle to a country that emerged out of what they consider their own mercy. This sense of military weakness is added to a disproportionately augmented sense of a new “mission civilisatrice”, as Kagan calls it, that Europe feels it should spread around the world – the mission to transmit its own experience of the transition to perpetual peace, without violence, through economic cooperation. Europe’s new mission clashes with the mission America has on its part – the mission to spread the values that have elevated it to its unprecedented world dominance in all spheres of life. “America’s power and its willingness to exercise that power – unilaterally if necessary,” Kagan writes, “constitute a threat to Europe’s new sense of mission.”³ At the same time, Europeans seem to forget that what propelled them into the world of perpetual peace was the sense of security that the same American power they so much despise gave them after World War II. Having made the transition to this highly sophisticated “paradise”, they also forget that most of the world remains an underdeveloped, highly insecure, very often chaotic (“Hobbesian”, as Kagan calls it) place, where military power is still the only language a lot of leaders speak and understand.

In this insightful short book, Robert Kagan explains masterfully the psychological layer beneath particular disputes between European and American leaders. What will help to resolve them will be an honest approach from both sides. Europeans need to learn to live with the fact that America is the world’s only hegemon, and not be grudging about the fact that its *benevolent* hegemony will sometimes have to sacrifice its benevolence when dealing with hard-headed dictatorships possessing weapons of mass destruction. Americans should be more accommodating of the Europeans’ desire of appeasing negotiation, even if sometimes they consider it an end-in-itself preoccupation with the

³ Kagan R. “Of Paradise and Power”, p. 60

rule of collective decision-making. They should look back into Europe's bloody history to understand why Europeans cherish peace so much, once they finally got it.

The decision to wage the war in Iraq should be necessarily viewed in light of the fundamentally changed American position in the world after Sept. 11, 2001. It is a shaping event that will eventually force America to define its national interest as conclusively as it did in World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. The war in Iraq is a test not so much of America's ability and willingness to contribute to a broad international consensus on security and sovereignty issues as it is a test of American society's inner strength to overcome the deep division caused by the Vietnam War, a task it has avoided to tackle in earnest ever since the end of the Cold War. It is once again an affirmation that there is no end to history; or, even if there is one, it will not come by itself, but should be achieved.

The decision to wage war in Iraq signifies the striking transition in the foreign policy views of President Bush since the Sept. 11 attacks. From a follower of his father's cautious approach of rejecting foreign involvement as much as possible when it is not in an immediate geopolitical interest for the United States, he turned into a staunch internationalist who aptly employs Reagan and Truman-type rhetoric to motivate his people and justify his decisions to his allies.

A lot is at stake in America's effort in Iraq, therefore the reasons and possible outcomes of undertaking it should be carefully examined. As a part of the broader campaign against terrorism, the so-called War on Terror that America waged in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 events, our analysis should ask the question whether the war in Iraq fits in the concept of the War on Terror, whether war was the necessary and single means for achieving the defined goal, whether *unilateral* war was the necessary and single means of achieving the defined goal, whether the moment for waging the war was carefully deliberated.

Another legitimate problem that should be explored is the marked decrease of international support for America's effort in Iraq, compared to the military operation in Afghanistan two years ago. Critics of the war argue that this is a powerful evidence for its inappropriateness. Proponents of the war retort that the international community supported the War on Terror as long as it was defined in broader terms and the enemy

was easily recognized and presented an equal threat on all states. Robert Kagan, again in “Of Paradise and Power” gives a simple but accurate explanation for Europe’s opposition to the war – Europeans are less powerful, therefore they can achieve less; Americans, being more powerful, *know* they can achieve more and “developed a lower threshold of tolerance for Saddam.”⁴

The formal objection of Europeans against the war was framed as a demand that the United States complies with the decision of the Security Council of UN for a thorough inspection of all the possibilities of Iraqi storage of weapons of mass destruction. This objection remains formal, because the real issue was whether the American President can justify the war before the American people. The American society is the true determinant of the American national interest. And he had an overwhelming support in the beginning of the war.

On the issue whether war was the only possible means for achieving the goal of regime change, the answer can be found in the Bush Doctrine. There preemption is laid out as a necessary prerequisite paving the way toward regime change. Using force as a first resort against undeterrable, unpredictable, irrational dictators such as Saddam Hussein is an even more compelling case. The issue of deterrability is indeed the chief characteristic which distinguishes American policy toward Iraq and North Korea. The United States has been accused of hypocrisy for leading a war against Saddam, when the North Korean regime is clearly the more repressive, dismal and dangerous (because of its possession of nuclear weapons) one. But repressive dictatorship is not the only reason for United States’ decision to start a war. Besides, a clear-cut conclusion on which of the two regimes is more repressive can by no means be easily reached. The evidence Bill Kristol and Lawrence Kaplan give in their book “The War Over Iraq” of Saddam’s atrocities and inhuman treatment of his people is truly appalling. The North Korean dictatorship is the more rational, therefore the United States is more likely to be able to contain it. Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, as he has proved in the Iran-Iraq war and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, is not restrained by an objective assessment of his country’s military capabilities and is likely to gamble. This, in fact, makes him a more formidable threat than the North Korean leadership.

⁴ Kagan R. “Of Paradise and Power”, p.31

The justification for preemption should not be looked for in the past, but rather in the future. Preemption is just the first phase mentioned in the Bush Doctrine. What really signifies American commitment, what turns the unilateral use of force into a rational quest for peace and stability and provides the necessary ingredient of idealism in the so much talked about symbiosis, are the two subsequent requirements of the Doctrine – regime change sustained by American leadership. The war in Iraq was fought not only because the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction posed a threat to the world – it was fought because American politicians carefully had estimated that Iraq is the most appropriate place in the Middle East for democracy to take root. The use of military force was necessitated by the fact which was already discussed – a cruel dictatorship that would not give upon the rights and privileges it presumed exclusive only for itself.

The much more difficult issue is undoubtedly how to steer post-war Iraq in the desired direction toward liberal democracy. The United States should carefully lay a framework of post-Saddam development that will alleviate the disputes between Shiite and Sunni Muslims. In this light, the decision to form a provisional government designed to carry out elections for a national assembly (that will draft a constitution) through indirect election may be very helpful, because a general election will give priority to the more numerous Shiite sect and will exacerbate the controversies. The new constitution should provide a functioning fundament of the future Iraqi political system. In that respect the United States should strive to achieve more than has been achieved by the Bosnian constitution, for example. It will be very useful to look back into the other nation-building efforts America has launched in the previous decade – in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan and objectively analyze the mistakes, as well as the features, peculiar to Iraq, which might allow the mistakes to be done again, or might help to avoid them. The crucial aspect of post-war restoration of Iraq, however, will remain a decisive American commitment to stay the course and “go it alone”, even when faced with lack of international consensus.

If the United States succeeds in its quest for democracy there, and especially if it succeeds alone, this will help dispel the suspicions of its allies of unjustified unilateralism and “teach them a lesson”, will increase American soft power, and will be immensely

important for American society to overcome its ambiguity and finally render a consensual version of the American national interest. The course of post-war development of the democratization process in Iraq will have immediate influence on the 2004 presidential election campaign as well.

The successful rebuilding in Iraq will have substantial reverberations in the Middle East region, too. It will set a precedent that might evolve into a trend and serve as an example how to tackle the intractable largely religion-based disputes there. If Iraq disappears from the Israeli list of immediate dangers, it is likely that the Israeli government will adopt a more accommodating stance toward the Palestinians. The Palestinians, on the other hand, might realize that rigid fragmentary violence is futile and the example of Iraqi extrication from fundamentalism might trigger an inclination toward reasonable gradual secularization in the PLO leadership. In such a course of events, unofficial agreements as the one recently signed in Geneva might find more favorable resonance among officials of both opposed parties and multilaterally favored policies such as the Road Map might begin to be implemented in practice sooner.

In the event of an establishment of liberal democracy in Iraq, the Iranian ayatollah regime will have to dig deep to extend its credibility in the face of strengthening opposition. It is highly likely that the use of military force will be unnecessary in Iran in such circumstances.

The war in Iraq will have important implications for the relations of the United States with other vital geopolitical regions, such as East Asia. The current configuration of forces on the chessboard of East Asia is very much in America's favor. It has reliable, economically developed allies in the face of Japan and South Korea and countries with increasingly democratic systems and progressing economies, such as Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines.

Two potentially dangerous geopolitical entities emerge in the region – an immediate threat posed by North Korea, and a long-term threat posed by China. China is by far the stronger challenger overall, because it allows for a private sector in its economy, which is developing rapidly, its communist regime is more permeable to Western influence and American soft power, and not so outrageously opposed to the United States. The mindset of Chinese leaders does not include the relentless bargaining that characterizes the North

Korean leaders' mindset. The only form of existence of North Korea with its current type of government is total isolation from the outside world. China, on the other hand, recognizes the importance and inevitability of globalization and is willing to be an active participator and beneficiary. The economic advantages of globalization will produce far more favorable results for China than encapsulation in stiff demagoguery enforced by the ideology of communism. Communism is losing its grip on Chinese leaders as a crucial to the shaping of its foreign policy component.

In his article about US-China relations in the Kagan/Kristol reader "Present Dangers" Ross Munro argues that the place of communism is filled by surging Chinese nationalism. Its goal, according to him, is an Asia where no country could oppose it and achieving that end means domination over Japan, the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and the rest of Southeast Asia northward to Myanmar and Vietnam. This is a very serious accusation which is not based on an objective assessment of the actualities in the region. It is highly improbable that Chinese leaders, whose foreign policy has always been characterized by patience and careful examination of all risks, believe that there is a plausible way they can achieve and be able to control such a vast territory for a prolonged time. A conflict with the United States, inflamed by a hypothetical Chinese invasion in one of the mentioned countries "will free all the countries around the vast Chinese periphery to pursue their various ambitions and claims."⁵

Much more moderate and argued is Nye's position on US-China relations. Giving credit to China for the striking economic achievements of the last decades, he provides abundant evidence that even retaining the same rate of growth, it will not reach the economic level of the United States soon, let alone surpass it. Henry Kissinger also believes that the United States is fairly secure with respect to China and "for the foreseeable decades, the United States possesses diplomatic, economic, and military advantages allowing it to shape the future without resorting to preemptive confrontation with China."⁶

Such a confrontation is most likely to occur as a result of inaptitude over the sensitive issue of Taiwan independence. All three authors – Munro, Nye and Kissinger –

⁵ Kissinger H. "Does America Need a Foreign Policy", p. 147

⁶ Kissinger H. "Does American Need a Foreign Policy", p.148

agree that it is the crucial short-term point of tension in US-China relations. Whereas Munro insists that the United States should support independence for Taiwan or it will lose its credibility in Asia, both Kissinger and Nye recommend abiding by the position adopted by all American presidents since 1972 of a “one-China” policy over a “two-China” or “one-China/one-Taiwan” policy. They recognize the delicacy of the issue but are correct in assessing that abandoning the “one-China” principle is likely to lead to undesirable military confrontation with China, while adhering to it will at least sustain the current situation which is more favorable to Taiwan if compared to the prospect of an uncertain outcome of a possible Chinese conflict with the United States.

In conclusion it must be said that a decision as large-scaled as the war in Iraq has already changed the world. Whether it is for the better or the worse of the world, papers like this, or, for that matter, books like Zakaria’s “The Future of Freedom” and Kristol and Kaplan’s “The War Over Iraq”, are helpless to provide a definitive answer. Only the future, if shaped by an honest, staying commitment of American society to the ideals it fights the war for, can tell if this journey has been, to borrow a famous movie phrase, “the beginning of a wonderful friendship” between the Western world and the Middle East.