AMERICA’S CLAIMED ROLE IN THE LAST DECADE

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**Introduction**

Times of change are also times of confusion. American policy makers and other western world leaders had hoped that the termination of the Cold War would end the existing global conflicts and the world system would pursue an evolving new world of peace.  However, the disintegration of the Soviet Union has been followed by major changes in the international system, which resulted in the formation of a new world order/disorder i.e. international crisis of new nature.  Consequently, the United States, the sole remaining superpower, is bound to reshape its foreign policy strategy to cope with the new challenges and best meet its interests. “In the post-Cold War as before, America’s sense of who they are and what kind of world they aspire to shape the choice of ends and means” ([[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn1" \o ")).

To begin with, the United States now considers itself a world police. This role is derived from realist scholars? point of view that is based on the assumption that they put forward and that there is no legitimate nor an internationally recognized world central government to determine aggression, then, the United States has to do the job.

The United States assumes that a world police is a domestic need because the world beyond their borders holds dangers for them. There is no benign “invisible hand” of international relations ensuring that the decisions and actions of nearly 200 countries and the people in them add up to a stable and benevolent international environment - or one they could safely ignore from behind their oceans. The attacks of September 11 laid to rest any thoughts they might have had along those lines.  They revealed that “grand terrorism” - what President Bush has termed “the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology” - has emerged, and arguably the major threat to American lives and national security.

For half a century America’s engagement in the world revolved around containment of a hostile Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s collapse relatively enhanced America’s security. American policymakers established new grounds to justify the use of American military force in the world.  None of them, of course, is placed in the context of hegemony, but they are disguised in humanist wrappings. They include human rights (Iraq 1991), democracy (Haiti 1994), starvation (Somalia 1992-1993), drug traffic (Panama 1998), terrorism (Afghanistan 2001), and weapons of mass destruction (Iraq 2003). America thus, bound to reserve its position as the sole superpower and a global hegemon, will be engaged, and will lead to the extent that U.S. defines its global responsibilities in terms of the satisfaction of economic needs and geopolitical strategies.

(Important traditional challenges also remain. Daily Americans open newspapers) to read about strife in the Middle East, confrontation between India and Pakistan, armed conflict in the Korean Peninsula, and violence from both right and left in Cambodia. These problems were with Americans on September 10, 2001 and they remain with them today. Europe is occupied with completing its own internal development, while Asia lacks common perspectives and strong institutions. Latin America and Africa do not yet have large powers capable of playing a global role. Americans feel that it falls on them to lead. By virtue of their fears, their capitalist system, economic global reach, their domestic diversity, and their military raw power, they hold a unique place in the international hierarchy. The decisions that Americans make or fail to make, the actions they take or fail to take, and the words they say or fail to say have widespread repercussions.

American foreign policy has been drawn differently in light of the end of the Cold War and the beginning of another global war, the war on terrorism after September 11. In designing its foreign policy strategy and conduct, the United States seems to beg questions like: How to define America’s national interests? What is the size of threats to those interests coming from beyond their border? What obstacles and opportunities are there to deter or advance those interests? And what policies and programs could best defend interests and take advantage of opportunities ([[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn2" \o "))?

In his book, Lafeber quotes Ralph Reed who said: “The end of wars doesn’t bring stability. They bring chaos and recriminations.

Postwar eras are periods of an enormous realigning of political lines” ([[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn3" \o ")). George Bush and Bill Clinton became the first U.S. Presidents who had to deal with a fragmented world that moved from a bipolar system to a unipolar system with the U.S. having a remarkable relative power enabling it to deal with world affairs.  With the end of the Cold War, an international system that had politically, economically, and strategically involved every country in the world disappeared overnight. As international trade and commerce have rapidly expanded, people and places have undergone unprecedented change. The explosion of the scientific knowledge has produced remarkable inventions, and human horizons appeared limitless.  The world approached two opposing forces:  globalization and fragmentation. A better guideline would be Benjamin Barber inaptly entitled essay “Jihad vs. McWorld”. For him Jihad representing tribalism/fragmentation and McWorld as globalization/ integration are two major forces interacting on the world stage. He argues that both forces disagree on every point except one – “they are both threatening to democracy” ([[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn4" \o ")). With the two opposing forces, the world is falling apart and coming together at the very same moment.  Globalization created a world that was increasingly interconnected in which national boundaries were less important, and that generated possibilities as well as problems. “Globalization isn’t a choice, it’s a reality,… and the most basic truth about globalization is this: no one is in charge” ([[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn5" \o ")).

The global system is threatened by the forces of fragmentation. Rising insecurity and unmet needs were leading people everywhere to seek refuge in smaller groups such as nongovernmental organizations, but fragmentation could also lead to fanaticism, isolationism, separaticism, and the proliferation of civil and ethnic conflicts. Thomas Friedman’s The Lexus and the Olive Tree is a version of the world’s two opposing forces. Olive trees are important. They represent everything related to roots, be it a family, a community, a tribe, a nation, or a religion. Conflicts between Serbs and Muslims, Jews and Palestinians, Armenians and Azeris are over who owns the olive tree, and the logic is: I must control this olive tree or my whole sense of home will be lost.  Forces of fragmentation are driving states, groups, or actors “harmed by various forms of interdependence,” thus, “will seek to thwart or even reverse its spread” ([[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn6" \o ")). On the other side of the stage, the Lexus is imminent as it represents a fundamental drive for improvement, prosperity, modernization, global markets, financial institutions, and computer technologies with which we pursue higher living standards. And the United States has chosen to follow this path. Friedman exemplifies the U.S. as the “electronic herd” that states can defy, but they will pay a price as did Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Cuba, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He proclaims: “America truly is the ultimate benign hegemony” ([[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn7" \o ")).

The interaction between the forces of integration and those favoring fragmentation will have different consequences depending upon the distribution and concentration of power among states. It is sound mathematics to suggest that if we subtract one superpower from a bipolar world we are then left with a unipolar system. Therefore, a new world order has emerged where the U.S. is the world’s sole remaining superpower. With the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union’s 15 members became separate nations. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia splintered; Africa and Southeast Asian nations sank into domestic warfare. Drug traffic increased. Germany’s unification generated fear among nations mostly a weak Soviet.  The problem of Kashmir has induced both India and Pakistan to continue building a high military profile. Iraq invades the neighboring oil kingdom of Kuwait.

A new world order was being reformulated where states were becoming more dependent and globalization as a process led to the U.S. assertion that its economic interests were at stake in an unstable world. The U.S., consequently, has to restore order in a best way that fit for its national security interests. No other country pocesses as impressive an accumulation of resources across the three major dimensions of national power: political, economic, and military. “Because the United States is relatively little dependent on others, it has a wide range of policy choices and the ability both to bring pressure on others and to assist them” ([[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn8" \o ")). More than any other state, the U.S. makes the rules and maintains the institutions that shape the international political economy. Economically, the United States is the world’s most important country; militarily, it continues to spend at a Cold War pace. Thomas Friedman puts the point simply: The world is sustained by “the presence of American power and America’s willingness to use that power against those who would threaten the system of globalization … The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist” ([[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn9" \o ")).

Geopolitics and balance of power are essential modes of thinking to America’s grand strategies. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is a major threat to U.S.’s closest oil-rich allies and associates - Saudi Arabia - as well as a threat to Israel's hegemony in the Middle East. It is also a threat from the “expansionist aspirations of the revolutionary government of Iran” ([[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn10" \o ")). If key American allies such as Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia were threatened by radical Tehran, the entire region could be engulfed in turmoil, jeopardizing a steady supply of oil to the West, thus threatening U.S.’s vital interests. The Gulf region pocesses nearly two-thirds of global petroleum supplies, and the region is driven by a multitude of power rivalries, religious schisms, and territorial disputes. ([[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn11" \o ")) These divisions have caused violence in the region, which could endanger the flow of oil to the West. Therefore, intervention by outside powers, mainly the U.S. is imminent.

The truth remains: “the stronger have many more ways of coping with adversities than the weak have, and the latter depend on the former much more than the other way around” ([[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn12" \o ")). The United States is the only country that can organize and lead a military coalition to defeat Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait generated new alliances and coalitions and new perspectives through which the U.S. reconsidered its foreign policy strategies in order to deal with a new world order/disorder. “The interests of the dominant state, or hegemon, generally lie in furthering the cause of global integration and in suppressing fragmentationist impulses” ([[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn13" \o ")). In his address to Congress on the end of the Gulf War, President George Bush heralded “a promise of “a new world order”, in which self-determination, cooperative deterrence, and joint action against aggression would come to hold together sway” ([[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn14" \o ")).

Throughout the Cold War, the United States had to contain a global threat to market democracies, now that the Soviet threat is gone, containment is replaced by enlargement. Enlargement means more involvement.  America?s challenge then is to lead on the basis of opportunity more than fear. The Bush Administration redoubled America’s commitment to liberalizing international trade through the GATT. According to Anthony Lake, Assistant to President Clinton for National Security Affairs, U.S.’s main objective for enlargement is to promote “market democracies” on the basis that the U.S. will be more secure, prosperous and influential, while the broader world will be more human and peaceful ([[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn15" \o ")). The expansion of market-based economics would help to expand U.S.’s exports and create American jobs while it also improves living conditions and fuels demands for political liberalization abroad. Anthony Lake explains how both processes strengthen each other: “democracy alone can produce justice, but not the material goods necessary for individuals to thrive; markets alone can expand wealth, but not that sense of justice without which civilized societies perish” ([[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn16" \o ")). When the U.S. contained communism, their engagement abroad was animated both by calculations of power and the belief that democracy and market economics hold sway in other nations. When communism faded, U.S.’s interests compelled it not only to be engaged, but to lead and engage internationally as the sole superpower. The United States now has a free hand in overthrowing Noriega from Panama, in taking the lead fighting apartheid in Africa and making peace side by side with Mandela.  Clinton triumphed when Congress completed the North Atlantic Free Trade Association (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada, and was close to reach a long-term agreement with China.  Clinton’s doctrine of enlargement went further to open diplomatic relations with former enemy Vietnam and thus lifted its 24-year economic embargo.

Enlargement most importantly included the number-one military power, NATO.  Through NATO, the United States has sought to extend, in the words of President Bill Clinton, “the fabric of transatlantic prosperity and security” into Central and Eastern Europe and possibly Russia ([[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn17" \o ")).

To begin with, what catalyzed NATO was a strong desire to link Europe and America in response to the Soviet threat.  NATO mollified European concerns about a potential threat; contributed to a greater sense to West European unity and security, and provided a mechanism for the U.S. to participate in European economic and military recovery.  With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has been realized that a “realistic security policy cannot be geographically limited but must conceptualize wider geographical risks” ([[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn18" \o ")).

The end of the Cold War came about quickly, posing a major challenge to NATO. Then, the Berlin Wall fell and Germany unified, and the Warsaw Pact disbanded. Thus, the core factors that had contributed to NATO’s creation were gone. For NATO, there was relief and confusion.

Alliances are generally formed in response to an external threat and their cohesion is largely dependent on the intensity and duration of that threat, and one major cause of their disintegration is the reduction or disappearance of the threat against which they were initially formed ([[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn19" \o ")). However, NATO members - mainly the United States - continued to attach great importance to the alliance and worked to expand NATO’s functions and purposes, to expand towards Central Europe.  Increasing political and economic integration suggested that future security efforts by interdependent states are likely to consolidate NATO. Alliances like NATO are likely to endure, especially as publics are increasingly unwilling to support unilateral security measures where the costs cannot be measured. NATO provided logistical support to coalition forces on their way to the Persian Gulf in 1991, and NATO was revitalized after its success in stabilizing ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia between Orthodox Christian Serbs, Roman Catholic Croats, and Bosnians mainly Moslem.

NATO’s expansion was aimed at securing greater stability in Central Europe, cementing the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe, and infusing Russia into Europe. In 1997 NATO agrees to give Russia a consultative non-vote role in some discussions, and in 1999 it officially accepts the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into membership. NATO is also needed to keep the military potential of united Germany “locked into an integrated military structure” ([[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn20" \o ")). It could also play a role in coping with threats to the NATO countries coming from the Middle East or Africa. The NATO command structure would remain ready to provide collective defense to its members, and collective security rests on the single notion of all against one. It will remain, for the next decade at least, an indispensable instrument of American policy.

George W. Bush became the U.S. President in 2000, and a new era of international relations developed.  Although the U.S. has seemingly shown respect for international law, and encouraged multilateral behavior, yet the way the United States under the Bush Administration chose to implement its foreign policy strategy argues that unilateralism undercuts U.S. national interests. “Multilateralism refers to the cooperation of three or more states in a given area of international relations” ([[21]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn21" \o ")).   Multilateral frameworks of cooperation vary in a range of ad hoc coalitions, to international regimes, to formal multilateral organizations.  They operate on the basis of equal treatment (i.e. the U.N. General Assembly) or give certain privileges to their most powerful members (i.e. the U.N. Security Council, the World Bank, and NATO).

By contrast, “unilateralism refers to a tendency to opt out of multilateral framework or to act alone in addressing a particular global or regional challenge rather than choosing to participate in collective action” ([[22]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn22" \o ")). Unilateralism can also be defined as a “process of policy making within a tight group of national decision makers who disregard foreign perspectives and thus produce policies serving narrow national interests” ([[23]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn23" \o ")). In this respect, the new trend of the neo conservatives conducting foreign policies of the Bush administration - especially those on military matters - are rightly accused of unilateralism, among which we name Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Chenney.

Globalization is drawing the world closer and raising challenges that no country, even as powerful as the United States, could solve on its own. Yet, the United States chose to opt out of treaties, to limit its commitments to global institutions and organizations, and to act alone rather than collectively. This tendency has been clear both in the Clinton and Bush years. The withdrawal of the United States from the ABM Treaty (Anti Ballistic Missile), opting out of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, refusing to ratify the statutes of the International Criminal Court of Justice, are major instances of the U.S. administration going it alone.  It seems “what is right for America is regarded by the White House as right for the whole world” ([[24]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn24" \o ")).

U.S. relations with the United Nations have also been a source of concern. The U.S. retreated from its early post-Cold War involvement in UN peace operations and adopted a more restrictive and selective attitude. While willing to intervene in Europe, through NATO, it devoted little support to UN peace operations in Africa. Later, the Bush Administration has declined to include the U.S. forces in the UN operation in Afghanistan. After September 11, the President’s “axis of evil” statement has raised concerns about military unilateralism.  Although the UN Security Council anticipated the U.S. attack on Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime, but it does not encompass the overthrow of regimes with records of aggressive behavior nor does it legitimate the use of force against states deemed unfriendly ([[25]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn25" \o ")). In addition, the unilateral U.S. decision to launch war on Iraq undermined the United Nations Security Council’s lawful authority to maintain international peace and security. Some say that despite his declared readiness to act unilaterally, President Bush has been soliciting support from consequential states, including China and Russia. Others viewed that without access to facilities in Pakistan and other states bordering Afghanistan, U.S. operations would have been much more difficult to sustain. And others observe that overthrowing Saddam Hussein without Turkish and Saudi support would be a very expensive feat.  Furthermore, “a unilateralist policy might gradually strain relations with France, the United Kingdom, and Germany” - countries on which the U.S. relies for help in building weak or rogue states ([[26]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn26" \o ")). However, a fact remains: “the Bush administration may form coalitions when it suits the United States but its overriding mission is to show the world why the American way is best” ([[27]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn27" \o ")). And make no mistake: “although the United States was able to construct a coalition of supportive states, the invasion of Iraq and was broadly perceived as a solo act - an unprecedented repudiation of world opinion openly disregarding the idea of multilateralism embodied in the United Nations Charter” ([[28]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn28" \o ")).

In most parts of the world, there were no regional powers that could keep the peace, at least not on behalf of American interests and values, therefore, the United States had to do it alone and designate itself as the world police. With the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. soil, a new era has emerged generating new concepts and frameworks for foreign policy conducts.  A new “ism” surfaced, that is terrorism.

Terrorism is defined in the United States by the Code of Federal Regulations as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment there of, in furtherance of political or social objectives” ([[29]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn29" \o ")). It is an end that justifies the means. Terror has been practiced throughout history and throughout the world. But the terror attack of September 11 is undoubtedly the most significant and lethal terror operation in the modern history. Its impact has been greatly magnified by its targeting the U.S. and the use of modern technology and communications media.  It attracted television coverage, which brought the event directly into millions of homes. Terrorists used the high-tech globalization against Americans who had originated so much of the technology and it seems that “Americans and terrorists are resembled in having a vision of globalization” ([[30]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn30" \o ")).

The United States is now launching a war on another ideology yet with no borders. The Bush administration declares a global war on terror and that entails a new strategy. Thus, the Bush administration initiated a National Security Strategy known as the Bush doctrine overturning the established order.  Not because it commits the U.S. to global intervention; they were involved before. Not because it targets terrorism and rogue states (Iran, Iraq, and North Korea); nothing new either.  What’s new is that it makes a long-building imperial tendency explicit and permanent. In another sense, the September 11 attacks allowed the “Bush administration to avert the crisis of legitimacy it had previously faced, and re-enter world affairs with a new sense of confidence” ([[31]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn31" \o ")). These terrorist events gave the United States a chance to shape up international politics, and a justification for easy recourse to war whenever and wherever an American President chooses.

“The ongoing global war on terror launched by the Bush administration has greatly reshaped many aspects of U.S. foreign policy and will have a far-reaching impact on international relations and global strategic configurations”  ([[32]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn32" \o ")). The whole world was reclassified relatively to the U.S.: “You are with us or against us.” The Bush doctrine not only makes no distinction between terrorists and those who harbor them but also does not allow neutrality, effectively forcing countries around the world to choose sides in the U.S.-led campaign against terror. The first main strategy of the Bush doctrine is to identify and isolate terrorist states.  These states include: Iraq, Iran, Syria, and North Korea. The second stage is to use preemptive military action against terrorist states to enforce a regime change, and the third is to engage in nation building, thus institutionalizing democracy ([[33]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn33" \o ")). This doctrine marks a shift of focus from powerful states to nation’s weak or illegitimate governments, as well as a shift in policy from deterrence and containment to more direct aggression. “The Bush doctrine is based on undefined conspiratorial enemies, shadowy networks of individuals who overlap with states and who are planning an imminent attack based on dangerous technologies” ([[34]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn34" \o ")).

The Bush doctrine does not target active terrorists with weapons that intent on causing harm.  It plans to destroy plans and emerging threats. The doctrine speaks of consultation, and freedom, yet it asserts the right to unilateral action.  It speaks of “allied cooperation”, yet the Bush administration attacks France and Germany, for not supporting the war on Iraq. The doctrine talks of “consultation”, yet it rejects the voice of the UN supporting the return of weapons inspectors into Iraq. The doctrine claims to support “independent and democratic Palestine”, yet fighting escalated in the occupied territories and the U.S. abstained from a UN resolution calling on Israel to stop bombing Arafat’s headquarters ([[35]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn35" \o ")). Simply described, the Bush doctrine combines the rhetoric of freedom, coalition building, consultation, and peace with the preparations of preemptive war, unilateral action and conquest.

The first stage of the campaign against global terror necessitated aggressive military turnover of the terrorist Taliban regime in Afghanistan on the basis that it was harboring Osama Bin Laden and his terrorist network. The second stage is the invasion of Iraq to overthrow the Saddam authoritarian regime on the basis that it possesses weapons of mass destruction (WMD). However, Bin Laden has not been captured, and WMD have not been found in Iraq.  In trying to understand the U.S. foreign policy behind the launching of these two wars, let us try and answer the how and why of the two stages.

Wars need alliances, therefore new alliances and coalitions were formed, i.e. Pakistan, India, Uzbekistan, and Russia, but at the same time long-time alliances were questioned, i.e. Egypt and Saudi Arabia.  Yesterday’s allies are today’s enemies and vice versa. Osama Bin Laden and his groups fought with the U.S. against the Soviet Union’s expansion in the Caspian Sea region. Iraq was militarized by the U.S. during the Iran-Iraq war.  Saudi Arabia financed terrorist organizations and 15 out of the 19 September 11 hijackers are Saudis. Behind the purpose of the war on Afghanistan aiming at capturing Osama Bin Laden, dismantling al Qaeda, and toppling the Taliban regime, it seems that “a specific war on Afghanistan had been planned at least a year earlier than October 2001, and terms related to regional strategic and economic interests, had actually been rooted in at least four years of strategic planning” ([[36]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn36" \o ")). Behind the war on Iraq and the distortion of WMD, which up till now have not been found, lays another purpose of the U.S. existence in the Middle East. The Bush doctrine clearly defines this purpose by stating that threats to “economic freedom” - the failed neo-liberal economic system - is one of the key values which the U.S. will militarily defend through an offensive war ([[37]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn37" \o ")). Indeed, the Bush doctrine is found to “extend the geopolitical, military and political boundaries to conquer and exploit “new strategic regions” ([[38]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn38" \o ")).

The foreign policy strategy underlying the two wars on Afghanistan and Iraq is two-fold:  First, it has shifted the West-anti West confrontation from the U.S. soil to U.S. targets abroad. Second, it has secured U.S. long time desired geopolitical strategic influence in the Caspian Sea region and the Middle East.

The Caspian Sea basin composed of Russia and Iran, as well as several former republics of the Soviet Union - Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan - has “captured worldwide attention due to the phenomenal reserves of oil and natural gas located in the region” ([[39]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn39" \o ")). Kazakhistan and Turkmenistan possess large reserves of oil and natural gas. Uzbekistan has oil and gas reserves that may permit it to be self-sufficient in energy and gain revenue through exports. Although many states hope to benefit from the development of these reserves - Japan, Turkey, Iran, Western Europe, China, and Russia “the future development of the Caspian Sea region is clouded by ethnic and political turmoil within the region and the emergence of a new power struggle between the U.S. and Russia”([[40]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn40" \o ")). the potential for conflict derives from contested boundaries and territorial disputes, the prevalence of authoritarian regimes, severe economic disparities, long-standing regional rivalries, and ethnic and religious strife.

Global demand for many key resource materials is growing at an unsustainable rate, and specifically, the United States economic stability depends on securing enough supply of resources and raw materials considered vital for its economic welfare and development. Therefore, Central Asia would seem “o offer significant new investment opportunities for a broad range of American companies”([[41]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn41" \o ")), which, in turn, will serve as a valuable stimulus to the economic development of the U.S. and the region. Taking over Afghanistan, U.S. policy goals in Central Asia include breaking Russia’s monopoly over oil and gas transport rules; promoting Western energy security through different suppliers; encouraging the construction of East-West pipelines that do not transit Iran; and denying Iran dangerous leverage over Central Asian economies.

The war on Iraq is conceived by the United States as a war on evil that holds danger by the potential disposal of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Whether we approve or disapprove of the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the fact remains that the U.S. war on Iraq is deeply rooted in geopolitical calculations.

Oil. That is what the modern Middle Eastern geopolitics has been about. Given the vast energy resources that form the backbone of western economies, influence and involvement in the Middle East has been of paramount importance to the United States ([[42]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn42" \o ")). To maintain superiority, control and influence over the region, the West, mainly the U.S., have helped in the perpetuation of Arab leaders into their incumbent positions of power and supported the overthrow of those that are not seen as favorable. Protection of the Saudi regime has been a basic feature of U.S. security policy since 1945, when President Roosevelt made an arrangement with Ibn Saud. At the core of this arrangement there is a vital agreement, which is: in return for protecting the royal family of Al Saud against its enemies, American companies are allowed unrivaled access to Saudi oil fields.

The Middle East - mainly Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq - dominates world energy exports.  It has about 64% of the world proven oil reserves and 34% or its gas reserves. Algeria, Libya, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE play an important role as world suppliers ([[43]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn43" \o ")). The U.S. economy is dependent on the health of the global economy and on energy imports from Asia and the Middle East. But the question is: Will the Middle East act as a stable supplier of oil and gas exports at market driven prices?  This is not easy to predict in a region that has many internal and regional conflicts, economic, and major demographic problems.  In addition, most Middle East states have repressive regimes with a high degree of authoritarianism, thus, potential internal instability.

The United States, considering itself the world police, and determined to protect its vital interests in the region, decides to forge stability. “American officials claim that the conspicuous presence of U.S. troops in the Gulf and the demonstrated willingness of successive administrations to endorse the use of force will reduce the risk of conflict by deterring potential adversaries from obstructing the flow of oil” ([[44]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn44" \o ")). When Iraq invaded Kuwait, then the Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney explained that Saddam Hussein would acquire a “stranglehold” over the U.S. and world economy if he captured Saudi Arabia’s oilfields along with those of Kuwait. That was the main reason why the United States liberated Kuwait and invaded Iraq.  In the same context, the war against Iraq now is intended to provide the U.S. with a dominant position in the Persian Gulf region, and to serve as a facilitator for further conquests and assertion of power in the region.  It is aimed at Iran, Syria, and more at Russia, China, and Europe, as it is part of a larger process of asserting dominant power in this part of the world. When you think of oil, it is not just a source of fuel, but a source of power, and as U.S. strategists see it, “whoever controls the Persian Gulf oil controls the world’s economy, and therefore, has the ultimate level over all competing powers” ([[45]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade" \l "_edn45" \o ")).

The Middle East is the most militarized region in the world. And, with the U.S. geopolitical aspirations, stability should be stored, thus, weaponry should be limited. Lately, Libya decided to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction program and allow thorough inspections; Iran signed the protocol to the non-proliferation treaty allowing snap inspections of nuclear facilities. In addition, President Bush signed the Syrian Accountability Act, and, both the U.S. and Britain demanded Syria to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction, yet, Israel continues to develop its military capabilities, and the Arab Israeli conflict has not been resolved.

The Bush Doctrine calls for a better world where democracy prevails as the source of peace and stability, yet his strategy asserts the U.S.’s right for preemptive war. Benjamin Barber affirms that this preemptive war has failed, and it simply cannot coexist with democracy for although the war in Iraq is won, the peace has been lost where the U.S. is trying to impose democracy at the barrel of a gun.  Democracy, in its analytical explanation and theory is ideal, however, it comes from the inside and cannot be imposed from above.  In this sense, the U.S. foreign policy drawn in the Bush doctrine is best described as coercive openness, where it calls for freedom, peace, and democracy, albeit chooses to impose regime change and unilateral intervention.

It seems the United States, choosing to extend further its interests in the region, will face many obstacles. Now the United States faces the challenge of protecting as well as reforming Saudi Arabia. It needs the present regime to stabilize geopolitics and the oil economy. However, the Saudi regime is threatened by the differences among the Saudi royal family. Even though President Bush has repeatedly proclaimed that his administration will go after all those who harbor and support terrorists and that he hopes to democratize the entire Middle East, it is understood that Saudi Arabia up till now is excluded from both these measures.

The U.S. war on terror is limitless in time and space. And a suppressed people that sees U.S. influence as a major root cause of the current problems in the Middle East has led to a rise in acts of terrorism and anti-U.S. sentiment. When looking at some of the actions of the United States in the region, it can often be seen why this is eventually so. Then, how will the United States, in drawing its foreign policy strategy, promote democracy and contain this war?

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**أميركا والدور الذي اتخذته خلال العقد المنصرم**

غداة انتهاء الحرب الباردة وسقوط الاتحاد السوفياتي، اعتقد سياسيون غربيون، أميركيون تحديداً، أنهم مقبلون على حقبة تتسم بالأمن والسلام. غير أن الحدث، أي سقوط الاتحاد السوفياتي، نتج عنه نظام عالمي جديد تسوده الفوضى. إذ ذاك اعتمدت الولايات المتحدة الأميركية، وهي القوة الوحيدة السائدة، سياسات مختلفة تمكّنها من التعاطي في الشؤون الدولية بما يتلاءم مع مصالحها، على ضوء التغيرات التي أنتجت هذا النظام الجديد. ففي ظل غياب مرجعية دولية قادرة على الفصل في الخلافات بين الدول، عيّنت الولايات المتحدة نفسها شرطياً دولياً يحكم بين الدول، كما رأت أن العالم خارج حدودها يشكل خطراً على أمنها القومي، وقد استغلت في هذا المجال أحداث 11 أيلول.

خلال زهاء نصف قرن اعتمدت الولايات المتحدة الأميركية على سياسة احتواء قوة عدائية متمثلة بالاتحاد السوفياتي، فكانت علاقة أميركا بمعظم الدول الأخرى تهدف إما للتغلب على الاتحاد السوفياتي أو لموازنته. غير أن سقوط النظام الشيوعي وتفرّد الولايات المتحدة على الساحة الدولية عزّز إرادة أميركا بفرض أمن دولي يخدم مصالحها، فقدمت المبررات لتدخلها السياسي والعسكري في عدة دول هدفها المبطن هو الهيمنة، أما الظاهر فهو إنساني بحت يتراوح بين حقوق الإنسان (العراق، 1991)، الديمقراطية (هاييتي، 1994)، المجاعة (الصومال، 1992­1993)، تجارة المخدرات (باناما، 1998)، الإرهاب (أفغانستان، 2001)، وأسلحة الدمار الشامل (العراق، 2003).

بسقوط الاتحاد السوفياتي، تغلبت الرأسمالية على الشيوعية، وتجزأ الاتحاد السوفياتي إلى دويلات تسعى إلى الاستقلال بينما بدأت السوق العالمية تنفتح على تطور علمي وتكنولوجي تتحكم فيه ظاهرة العولمة واجتياح السوق الدولية للاقتصاد الداخلي لجميع الدول، ما هدّد مفهوم الحدود والسيادة في معظم هذه الدول، وأنتج مخاطر تهدد الاستقرار والأمن القومي للدول الضعيفة التي شكلت ردة فعل إرهابية موجهة خصوصاً ضد الولايات المتحدة الأميركية. من أهم هذه الأخطار: الإنعزالية، التطرّف، والنزاعات العرقية.

إن النظام الأميركي القائم على الرأسمالية هو في سعي دائم إلى إجبار الأسواق العالمية على الإنفتاح لتطوير نظام العولمة التي تفرض التفاعل بين الدول. من ناحية أخرى، فالنزاعات والمخاطر التي تهدد السلام والأمن العالمي كانت تحدّ بالطبع من قوة وفاعلية المصالح الإقتصادية للولايات المتحدة الأميركية. وبهذا انتقلت الإدارة الأميركية من سياسة الإحتواء إلى سياسة التوسع التي تفرض بالتأكيد التدخل، إما السياسي أو العسكري، في إدارة شؤون عدة دول. وأضحت الولايات المتحدة الأميركية، القوة الأكبر عسكرياً واقتصادياً، قادرة على فرض هيمنتها في نظام عالمي جديد. ومع تسلم جورج بوش الابن الرئاسة سنة 2000 بدأت ملامح جديدة تظهر في سياسة اميركا الخارجية بوصول ما يسمى بالمحافظين الجدد إلى الإدارة الأميركية، إذ حاولت هذه الإدارة أن تبدي تعاوناً وتمسكاً بالقانون الدولي ومنظمة الأمم المتحدة، غير أنها اتصفت بالأحادية في رسم وتطبيق سياستها الخارجية. وجاءت أحداث 11 أيلول لتعزّز هذا المنحنى فأعلنت الإدارة الأميركية حرباً شاملة على الإرهاب وقسّمت دول العالم بين صديقة وعدوة، مما استدعى رسم خطوط جديدة في سياسة أميركا الخارجية تمكنها من مواجهة أخطار تهدد أمنها ومصالحها. وحدّدت الإدارة الأميركية "محور الشرّ" الذي بات يضم العراق، إيران، سوريا وكوريا الشمالية، كما وضع بوش ما عُرف باستراتيجية الأمن القومي التي تهدف إلى عزل ومواجهة المجموعات الإرهابية والدول التي تؤويها، ونزع أسلحة الدمار الشامل، وإسقاط الأنظمة الديكتاتورية وإعادة بناء هذه الأنظمة على أسس ديمقراطية. لكن أهم ما جاء في استراتيجية بوش هو إطلاق مفهوم الحرب الوقائية، ممّا أعطى الولايات المتحدة الأميركية الحق أو الذريعة لشن حرب على أي دولة تختارها وفي أي وقت يناسبها. فكانت حرب أفغانستان ثم حرب العراق.

أسئلة كثيرة تطرح: ما هو الإرهاب بالتحديد؟ أين هو؟ وهل تستطيع الولايات المتحدة الأميركية أن تقضي عليه من خلال هذه الاستراتيجية؟ كيف تُبنى الديمقراطية؟ ما هو دور الأمم المتحدة؟ ما هو دور باقي الدول المتقدمة؟ وأسئلة أخرى تصعب الإجابة عنها ولكن مما لا شك فيه أن الولايات المتحدة الأميركية، تمكنت من أن تؤمن نفوذها في مناطق حيوية وغنية بالطاقة مثل الشرق الأوسط وجنوب شرق آسيا، وهذا هدف مرجو منذ ما قبل 11 أيلول.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/america%E2%80%99s-claimed-role-last-decade#sthash.SCHpEKK6.dpuf