

**George W. Bush, September 11th and the Rise of the Freedom  
Agenda in US-Middle East Relations: A Constructivist  
Institutionalist Approach**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis generates a greater understanding of the George W. Bush administration's Freedom Agenda for the Middle East and North Africa. It is motivated by two central research questions: How and why was the Freedom Agenda developed? And, how was the Freedom Agenda constituted? To address these questions, a constructivist institutionalist methodology is developed. The value of this undertaking, is that it theorises the relationship between the events of September 11, 2001, and the rise of the Freedom Agenda. Consequently, this research focuses on the narrative constructed in the aftermath of the "crisis", and how this laid discursive tracks for the evolution of the Freedom Agenda. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that the Bush administration appropriated and articulated multiple discourses into a distinctive ideological-discursive formation, which in turn, sedimented particular definitions of concepts such as 'democracy' and 'freedom'. This created a new policy paradigm, which failed to address the 'conflict of interests' problem central to US-Middle East relations. As a result, the Freedom Agenda demonstrated a commitment to regional stability and the gradual reform of ally regimes, whilst seeking to challenge regimes hostile to the US. It was a policy caught between promoting democracy and domination.

*This work is dedicated to Mum and Baba.*

*You have taught me more than I can express and supported me through everything.*

*Thank you, I am eternally grateful.*

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## **Abbreviations**

**ABM:** Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty

**ACDP:** Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion

**ADA:** ADVANCE Democracy Act

**BIT:** Bilateral Investment Treaties

**BMD:** Ballistic Missile Defense

**BMENA:** Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative

**CAQDAS:** Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

**DLO:** Democracy Liaison Office

**DOS:** United States Department of State

**DRL:** US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

**ESF:** Economic Support Funds

**FIS:** Islamic Salvation Front

**FLN:** Front de Liberation Nationale

**FPA:** Foreign Policy Analysis

**FSFME:** Forward Strategy of Freedom in the Middle East

**FTA:** Free Trade Agreement

**FY:** Fiscal Year

**GCC:** Gulf Cooperation Council

**GMEI:** Greater Middle East Initiative

**GSP:** Generalized System of Preferences

**HAMAS:** Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya

**IDF:** Ideological-Discursive Formation

**INC:** Iraqi National Congress

**IR:** International Relations

**JSP:** Joint Strategic Plan

**MEFTA:** Middle East Free Trade Area

**MENA:** Middle East and North Africa

**MEPI:** Middle East Partnership Initiative

**NDS:** National Defense Strategy

**NEA:** Bureau of Near East Affairs

**NED:** National Endowment for Democracy

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation

**NSPD:** National Security Presidential Directive

**NSS:** National Security Strategy

**UAE:** United Arab Emirates

**USAID:** United States Agency for International Development

**USTR:** U.S. Trade Representative

**TIFA:** Trade and Investment Framework Agreement

**WTO:** World Trade Organisation

## **Introduction**

This thesis seeks to generate a greater understanding of the George W. Bush administration's (2001 to 2009) Freedom Agenda for the Broader Middle East. As such, this thesis is motivated by two central research questions:

- How and why was the Freedom Agenda developed?
- How was the Freedom Agenda constituted and why was it done in this way?

To answer these research questions this thesis is methodologically driven but empirically rich. It combines theoretical innovation, which builds on the 'constructivist turn' in the social sciences, with empirical research. By undertaking this task, this thesis adds value to the current literature on both a theoretical and empirical level. Moreover, whilst the approach adopted is interdisciplinary in scope, it seeks to be firmly based within, and contribute to, the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) subfield of International Relations literature.

The particular focus of this thesis is United States foreign and security policy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. More specifically, it seeks to return to first order questions concerning the Bush administration's prioritisation of democracy promotion to the level of grand strategy in US-MENA relations. Such questions are imperative to answer, firstly because of a serious gap in the current literature, and secondly because of the highly ideological manner in which the Bush administration articulated particular discourses to legitimise its Freedom Agenda policy. Accordingly, the findings of this thesis are important on multiple levels. Firstly, they provide a deeper understanding of the Bush administration's policy towards the MENA, explicating the level of continuity and change that the Freedom Agenda presents within a long durée. Secondly, they problematise and critique

the policy by illustrating how essentially contested concepts such as ‘freedom’, and ‘democracy’ were sedimented into a particular ideological-discursive formation, consequently, constructing and propagating particular power relations and rule structures. Third, they illustrate problems with democracy promotion both philosophically and at the level of praxis, therefore signalling wider problems with such an approach being adopted by future administrations.

To answer the set research questions this thesis is broken down into four distinct sections. Section one begins by defining the policies and agencies that constitute the Freedom Agenda. The aim of this section is to demonstrate that the Freedom Agenda is composed of much wider policy actions than just the Iraq war in 2003. Notably, democracy promotion for the MENA has been pursued through the *Middle East Partnership Initiative* (MEPI), the *Middle East Free Trade Area* (MEFTA), the *Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative* (BMENA) and culminated in the *ADVANCE Democracy Act* of 2007 and *National Security Presidential Directive-58* (NSPD). These policies constitute the institutional and legislative structure buttressing the Bush administration’s liberal grand strategy, which sought to transform the MENA region into pro-Western democratic states. The institutionalisation of the Freedom Agenda has however created serious tensions in US-MENA relations. By advocating democratic reform, a ‘conflict of interests’ was created that challenged decades of US foreign policy in the region.

Since the end of the Second World War successive administrations have propagated the notion that American national interests in the region were satisfied by preventing the spread of communism, securing the free flow of oil and protecting the security and integrity of Israel’s borders. By advocating the democratisation of the region, however, the Bush administration was seen by many to challenge this status quo. Instead the Bush administration argued that American national interests lay in promoting democracy, as this

would be a method of eradicating terrorism, promoting regional stability, creating regional economic growth and ending tyranny. This created a 'conflict of interests' problematic, that the Bush administration attempted to navigate and resolve throughout its time in office.

By constructing the Freedom Agenda, the Bush administration invited a considerable amount of discord concerning US-MENA relations. A series of critiques emerged that challenged the Freedom Agenda by arguing that it would empower Islamist movements, cause regional instability, was based on a misunderstanding of movements such as Al Qaeda, and ultimately that the Freedom Agenda would harm indigenous groups promoting democratic reform. Conversely, a wide ranging consensus emerged to support the Freedom Agenda and argue that promoting democracy in the region was a necessity and the only method of combating the form of terrorism that demonstrated itself on September 11, 2001. Section one will review this literature, and demonstrate that the debate has often been overly concerned with strategic questions, rather than exploring what exactly the Bush administration believed the Freedom Agenda was supposed to be promoting. This leaves a gap in the literature, as there is a failure to address first order questions. To redress this issue it is argued that a hermeneutic analysis is needed, before critiques of praxis. It is only by doing this that it is possible to reactivate the sedimentary logics that underpinned the Freedom Agenda.

To add this hermeneutic dimension and create a greater understanding of the Freedom Agenda it is necessary to elucidate the methodology that underpins this research. This methodology must be capable of theoretically and historically (re)-constructing the context from which the Freedom Agenda developed and therefore be sensitive to institutional changes. Moreover, it must include the ability to analyse both the

underpinning philosophy of the Freedom Agenda and the manner in which this was turned into praxis. Consequently, section two of this research develops a methodological framework to analyse the Freedom Agenda at a meta-theoretical level. As such, it begins by critiquing ‘mainstream constructivist’ literature in International Relations theory, but puts forward ‘constructivist institutionalism’ as a modified alternative. It is argued that such a methodology is theoretically robust, and better equipped to answer the questions guiding this research.

The constructivist institutionalist methodology is able to guide this research because it builds on an insight made by Michael Barnett (1999), who argues that, traditional constructivist literature in International Relations has failed to incorporate a core insight of institutionalism, namely that actors strategise in institutional settings. Conversely, institutionalism fails to incorporate a core insight of constructivism, namely that actors are embedded in and circumscribed by a normative structure that demarcate the limits of legitimate and possible policy options. With this guiding mantra in place, it is argued that the constructivist institutionalist methodology is able to surmount this problem by explicitly developing a stance on ontological and epistemological debates; namely, the role of structure and agency, and ideas and material in political action. By virtue of engaging with these debates, it is argued that political time can be understood as a process of punctuated evolution, where “normal” policy-making is disrupted by crises and consequently evolves along an alternative path. Whilst this describes the shape of political time, it is argued that how crises are narrated provides the content of political change. Consequently, it is necessary to elucidate the ideological-discursive formation and rule structures that underpin post-crisis narration to understanding policy development and institutional evolution.

Deploying the constructivist institutionalist methodology in this research has a direct impact on the methods used for data analysis. Consequently, section two of this research will outline how a process-tracing narrative discourse analysis was utilised in an analysis of various ‘texts’ produced by the Bush administration. This technical section outlines how the computer software NVivo 8 was used to store and conduct an analysis of speeches, interviews, radio addresses, reports to congress, and official documents. The time span of these texts was from September 23, 1999, to January 19, 2009. These texts were analysed manually and supplemented with computer assisted searches until a level of discursive saturation was reached.

Section three of this research will detail the findings of the process-tracing narrative discourse analysis established as a result of the constructivist institutionalist methodology. In particular, this section specifically addresses the question of how and why the Freedom agenda developed in response to September 11, 2001. It begins by detailing the post-Cold War context in which the 2000 presidential campaign was contested. It argues that whilst the presidential campaign between Al Gore and George W. Bush was unexceptional, the importance of the campaign for the Freedom Agenda was that candidate Bush set out a distinctive ideological-discursive formation. Notably, Bush’s vision for US foreign policy, under the banner of a ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’ combined US primacy with hegemonic stability theory as a proposed means of preventing American decline. Furthermore, this was articulated with an understanding of how ‘freedom’ could be promoted through neoliberal methods, based on a particular understanding of modernisation thesis, to create a utopian organisation of democratic, prosperous, peaceful, secure interdependent states. Notably, this guiding philosophy was *not* applied to US-MENA relations prior to September 11, 2001. However, the importance of this ideological-discursive formation was that it provided the

foundations for the initial response to September 11, 2001, and evolved throughout the end of 2001 to early 2009, culminating in the Freedom Agenda being institutionalised.

Indeed, if the events of September 11, 2001 are understood as a crisis requiring a decisive intervention, it is possible to understand them as constituting a moment of punctuation in US-MENA relations. Accordingly, it is possible to understand the events themselves as critical to the structuring of political time, in that they introduced an uncertainty condition that strategically selective actors in the state bureaucracy sought to overcome. Initially, this was done by narrating the events as a tragedy. However, the Bush administration radically began to assimilate the events into a large historical understanding, constructing them as part of a moral play that required a ‘war on terrorism’. By seamlessly transforming this moral play into a moral crusade, the Bush administration foregrounded moral realism and American exceptionalism in an attempt to legitimise its response. As this ideological-discursive formation grasped multiple concepts together, the Bush administration provided a distinctive understanding of terms such as ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, ‘peace’ and ‘security’, which were then institutionalised into the Freedom Agenda.

Given this researches focus on post-crisis institutional development, it is argued that the rise of the Freedom Agenda can only be understood by focusing on the “official” narrative presented by the administration after September 11, 2001. It is this narrative that laid the discursive tracks that gave rise to the notion that America must defeat ‘evil’ and ‘advance freedom’. This shaped the content of change in the post-crisis context, and opened up a political space for contestation within the administration over what exactly had gone wrong and what should be done. Undeniably, before the Freedom Agenda came to fruition, multiple cumulative steps were taken that influenced its construction.



The war in Afghanistan began to shape what was deemed politically feasible and desirable, and with what was perceived as a swift victory, a new hubris was born that substantiated claims that the US could project its overwhelming military power in Iraq and socially engineer a democratic state in the Middle East. Consequently, from November 2001 through to the invasion in March 2003, individuals within the Bush administration began to view an invasion of Iraq as a means of creating a ‘domino effect’ throughout the MENA region. To supplement this vision and push the creation of democratic states in the region the Bush administration constructed the Freedom Agenda, legitimised by appeals to democratic peace theory and the universal appeal of freedom. This was presented by the Bush administration as a new overarching rationale to US foreign policy, which had been missing since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, it was presented as part of an ideological struggle in which a ‘foreign policy based on liberty’ and a ‘hopeful ideology called freedom’ could defeat extremists and their ‘hateful ideology’.

Whilst section three details the rise of the Freedom Agenda, and the evolutionary logics embedded within the post-crisis narration, section four addresses how the Freedom Agenda was constituted and why it was done in this way. It argues that, in spite of the Bush administration’s bold assertions that democracy promotion was in the national interest, the Freedom Agenda can be described as a policy of conservative radicalism. The approach is *radical* to the extent that it insists on political democracy, yet *conservative* in its desire to safeguard the socio-economic privileges and power of the established order to secure regional stability. Such a strategy was caught between democracy promotion and free trade as the positive route to liberty, and domination to the extent that negative liberty was undermined in favour of stability. As the Bush administration oscillated between emphasising both of these elements it enabled a double

standard in the Freedom Agenda to emerge. This was characterised by a slow gradualist policy guided by an understanding of freedom in economic terms for regional allies. However, for regimes that challenged American policy in the region, a strategy of regime change was pursued. This approach highlights the central contradictions in the Bush stratagem, which ultimately led to a retreat from the agenda from 2006 onwards. The Bush administration was ultimately unable to convert vision into action, because the zeal in which the strategy had been constructed contained ideological blind-spots. Due to the shallow understanding of freedom, based on neoliberalism and modernisation thesis being a dominant part of the Bush administration's ideological-discursive formation, it became evident that the administration was promoting a policy of low-intensity democracy in an inhospitable strategically selective context.

## ***Section One: Defining the Freedom Agenda and Reviewing the Literature***

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

**George W. Bush (2003\_11\_06)**

## **1. What is the Freedom Agenda?**

The ambition of promoting democracy in the Middle East is not new to the American people or their foreign policy. Since the early nineteenth century American missionaries have sought to take American values and plant them in the region. Inspired by the Second Great Awakenings of the nineteenth century and a desire for adventure in a new frontier, missionaries went to the Middle East to set up schools, clinics, churches and colonies, all with the aim of ‘letting in the light’ and spreading the ‘American Eagle of freedom’ (Oren 2007: 210-27; Mead 2001: 158-62; Hahn 2005: 2). Moreover, after the First World War, whilst Britain and France were fighting over “the great loot of the war”<sup>1</sup>, it was President Wilson who was arguing for ‘self-determination’ and ‘autonomous development’ for all ‘nationalities ... under Turkish Rule’<sup>2</sup> (Oren 2007: 377). Similarly, subsequent American Presidents have claimed that they support democratic governance for the Middle East. Thus, at the birth of the Eisenhower Doctrine the President argued that,

The Middle East has abruptly reached a new and critical stage in its long and important history. In past decades many of the countries in that area were not fully self-governing ... But since the First World War there has been a steady evolution toward self-government and independence. *This development the United States has welcomed and has encouraged. Our country supports without reservation the full sovereignty and independence of each and every nation of the Middle East* (Eisenhower 1957).

Contrastingly, in the same period, the political rhetoric did not match policy, with American idealist notions of self-determination and anti-colonialism giving way to conservative/imperial counterrevolutionary policies (Hahn 2005: 35-46; Yaqub 2004: 87-121; Gaddis 1997: 172-6). Thus, as Steve Smith has noted, ‘the debate about US democracy promotion seems to assume that the US has had a clear long-standing

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<sup>1</sup> A term used by William L. Westermann to describe the Interwar Middle East (cited in Oren 2007: 380).

<sup>2</sup> Of particular importance is Point Twelve of the Fourteen Points Plan presented to Congress in January 1918.

commitment to such a policy, I see the record as far more complex'<sup>3</sup> (2002: 65). What can however be asserted is that throughout the twentieth century, as the United States increasingly became involved in Middle Eastern affairs, and concerned over the region's geo-political orientation, the notion of promoting democracy in the Middle East was always at least a stated goal of US foreign policy.

Yet, it was under the George W. Bush administration, and in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, that promoting democracy in the Middle East was elevated and believed to be central to American national security interests. Thus, as Jessica Mathews notes,

Of all the tectonic shifts in US foreign policy emerging from the aftermath of 9/11, none is more potentially transformative than the widespread conviction in the US policy community that America must reverse its long time support for friendly tyrants in the Middle East and push hard for a democratic transformation of that troubled region (2005: vii).

At a surface level President Bush provided a succinct answer to explain why this shift was necessary,

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe ... As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo (Bush 2003\_11\_06).

Accordingly the intention behind of the Freedom Agenda was to use the full spectrum of means available to the United States for the 'advancement of human freedom and human dignity through effective democracy' (NSCT 2006: 9). The objectives of which were to:

- Eradicate terrorism
- Promote regional stability
- Promote regional economic growth
- End tyranny and create peace (see NSCT 2006)

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<sup>3</sup> For a lineal account of US democracy promotion see Tony Smith (1994) *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*.

Undoubtedly, these objectives were dominated by liberal ideals, and the Freedom Agenda was the quintessential expression of a liberal grand strategy. No bolder statement of such an approach could have been put forward than that asserted in the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS):

It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. In the world today, the fundamental character of regimes matters as much as the distribution of power among them. The goal of our statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. This is the best way to provide enduring security for the American people (NSC 2006: 1).

The “liberal grand strategy” label is often used to describe administrations characterised by their emphasis on the domestic character of other states as vitally important for the attainment of American security and material interests (see Ikenberry 2000: 103). The logical corollary of this notion is that promoting both American self-interest and values may actually assist one another. For national security liberals, it is believed that there is a symbiotic relationship between enhanced American global influence and the promotion of “peace, prosperity and freedom” (see Smith 2000b). Accordingly, as President Bush maintained,

Our greatest strength is that we serve the cause of liberty. We support the advance of freedom in the Middle East, because it is our founding principle, and because it is in our national interest (Bush 2003\_05\_09).

Notably the Bush administration was not the first to assert this symbiotic synergy of principles and interests. It is important to note that the genealogical origins of this approach date back as far as the eighteenth and nineteenth century. As such contemporary liberal prescriptions of the national interest have long roots growing out of the “progressive” philosophy of the European enlightenment, the creation of the United States and American’s Wilsonian tradition (see Wittkopf et al. 2002: 245-50; Mead 2001: 132-173; McCormick 1992). Then as now, liberal prescriptions of the national interest

concern the pursuit of peace and the elimination of war through cosmopolitan values such as democratic government<sup>4</sup> and free trade (see Burchill 2005: 104-151).

The novelty of the Freedom Agenda is the manner in which the Bush administration sought to spread democracy through coercive regime change, and to institutionalise a *Forward Strategy of Freedom in the Middle East* (FSFME). Whilst the former was most obviously expressed in the form of the 2003 Iraq war, the latter culminated in the Bush administration reinforcing and expanding the American ‘democracy bureaucracy’. Whilst a considerable amount of literature has focused on democracy promotion and the Iraq war, very little has acknowledged the formal institutionalisation process of the agenda and institutional changes that have taken place within the ‘democracy bureaucracy’. Thus, it is important to note that the Freedom Agenda consists of both “stick and carrot” methods<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, these “carrots” have largely, but not exclusively, taken the form of the *Middle East Partnership Initiative* (MEPI), the *Middle East Free Trade Agreement* (MEFTA), and the *Broader Middle East North Africa* initiative (BMENA). Each will be outlined in turn, followed by an explication of the legislative embodiment of the Freedom Agenda in the 2007 ADVANCE Democracy Act (ADA) and National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) - 58.

### **The Middle East Partnership Initiative**

The most dominant, but certainly not the only, institutional changes made by the Bush administration took place within the US Department of State (DOS), specifically in the

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that liberalism’s first prescription was for ‘liberty’ and not democracy until the mid-nineteenth century, when the fear of ‘mob rule’ gave way to the belief that authority is legitimate only with the consent of the governed (see Smith 1994: 15)

<sup>5</sup> This distinction is often referred to as “hard” and “soft” power approaches (see McInerney 2008). However this term has been deliberately avoided because of the manner in which Joseph Nye defines soft power as ‘the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments... aris[ing] from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies’ (2004b: x). Freedom Agenda programmes do not meet these criteria.

Bureau of Near East Affairs (NEA). Crucially Elizabeth Cheney<sup>6</sup> pushed for institutional reform and was the “brainchild” of the US flagship democracy assistance programme entitled the *Middle East Partnership Initiative* (MEPI) (Wittes 2008c). This programme was officially launched on December 12 2002 by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who argued that,

It is time to lay a firm foundation of hope. I am announcing today an initiative that places the United States firmly on the side of change, of reform, and of a modern future for the Middle East ... Through the *U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative*, we are adding hope to the U.S.-Middle East agenda. We are pledging our energy, our abilities, and our idealism to bring hope to all of God's children who call the Middle East home (Powell 2002\_12\_12).

The intention behind the MEPI programme was to ‘broaden’ the US approach to Middle East reform by focusing on factors highlighted in the 2002 *UN Arab Human Development Report*. This report outlined a ‘freedom deficit’ in the MENA, and argued that a strategy needed to be in place to deliver ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’, in conjunction with educational improvements and women’s empowerment to the people in the region (AHDR 2002). Significantly, this report was constructed by Arab scholars from the region, and MEPI was portrayed as building on regional desires (see Bush 2003\_05\_09; Powell 2002\_12\_12). Consequently, MEPI was divided into four pillars; Political, Economic, Education, and Women’s issues (See Table 1).

These four pillars were specifically designed to generate short-term grants, lasting for two years or less, which focused on addressing specific challenges to democratisation in the region. Accordingly, they sought to overcome problems that stymied longer term development projects ran by the *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) (see McInerney 2008: 11; Wittes 2008b: 89). To meet this goal, MEPI officials

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<sup>6</sup> The daughter of former Vice President Richard Cheney and in 2002 the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.



often worked with Arab governments, especially in the first two years, to invest funds in programmes geared toward ‘strengthening Arab civil society, encouraging micro-enterprise, expanding political participation, and promoting women’s rights’ (Sharp 2005b: 2). In practice, this translated into a plethora of programmes in each pillar, which were undertaken simultaneously and justified by their ability to complement and facilitate progress in each other (See Table 2).

To fund these programmes in Fiscal Year [FY] 2002 and FY2003, MEPI originally relied on emergency supplemental appropriations from Congress, which combined into a total of \$119 million (see Sharp 2005b: 4). However, from FY2004 to FY2008 MEPI received funding from Economic Support Funds (ESF) in the annual rounds of Congressional Foreign Operations Appropriations legislation. This peaked at a single year high of \$114.2 million in FY2006, but from FY2002 to FY2008 cumulatively totalled \$497.7 million (See Table 3).

Although these figures demonstrate the impact that the MEPI has had on financial commitments to MENA reform, the MEPI’s importance can also be discerned by the manner in which it impacted the US ‘democracy bureaucracy’ itself. Significantly, as part of the Bush administration’s commitment to the MEPI strategy, the MEPI became the ‘central hub’ for interagency discussions under the Freedom Agenda. Consequently, the MEPI was able to produce a joint review between the Department of State and USAID, in which USAID programmes in the MENA region were scrutinised to ensure compliance with the MEPI goals and objectives (See Epstein, Serafino, and Miko 2007: 1-3; Sharp 2005b: 3; Wittes 2008b: 89). The results of this review were published in a *Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) for Fiscal Years 2007-2012*, by the DOS and USAID, in which a strategy of ‘Transformation Diplomacy’ was proposed. The influence of MEPI was

certainly prominent in the joint mission statement asserted by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice:

The joint mission of the Department of State and USAID is to “*Advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly within the international system.*” It is a vision rooted in partnership, not paternalism--in doing things with other people, not for them (italics in original, JSP 2006: 4).

### **The Middle East Free Trade Area**

On May 9, 2003 the Bush administration proposed that a *US - Middle East Free Trade Area* (MEFTA) be established by 2013. President Bush argued that:

The combined GDP [Gross Domestic Product] of all Arab countries is smaller than that of Spain. Their peoples have less access to the Internet than the people of Sub-Sahara Africa. The Arab world has a great cultural tradition, but is largely missing out on the economic progress of our time. Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty. So, I propose the establishment of a U.S. - Middle East free trade area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region ... By replacing corruption and self-dealing, with free markets and fair laws, the people of the Middle East will grow in prosperity and freedom (Bush 2003\_05\_09).

MEFTA was perceived as an end goal of a series of cumulative measures targeted at twenty countries in the MENA<sup>7</sup>. On June 23, 2003, at the World Economic Forum held in Jordan, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Robert B. Zoellick outlined a six step process for MENA countries to create MEFTA:

1. Joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
2. Participating in the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme to increase US trade linkages with the MENA.
3. Negotiating and entering into new trade and investment framework agreements (TIFAs).
4. Negotiating formal bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with interested countries.
5. Negotiating comprehensive free trade agreements (FTAs) with the US, this would be combined into a sub-regional and ultimately a single MEFTA.

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<sup>7</sup> These countries included Algeria, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, the Gaza Strip/ West Bank, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (see Bolle 2006).

6. Participating in trade capacity building, by allowing the US to provide financial and technical assistance to realise the creation of open markets.

(See Zoellick 2003\_06\_23; Bolle 2006: 7-9; Lawrence 2006b: 1-2).

Eligibility for entering into this six step process required minimal concessions from MENA countries. The opportunity of joining MEFTA was left open to countries that met the following criteria:

- “Peaceful” and sought to increase trade relations with the US.
- Prepared to participate in economic reform and liberalisation.
- Not participating in primary, secondary, or tertiary boycotts of Israel.

(Bolle 2006: 9).

Whilst the US already had FTAs established with Israel and Jordan before September 11, 2001, it subsequently concluded FTA agreements with Morocco, Bahrain, the West Bank and Gaza and Oman. Moreover by the end of President Bush’s tenure in office the US had 15 TIFAs and 6 BITs in place with MEFTA eligible countries, and was assisting Arab governments that had not joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to reach this goal (See Table 4).

The motivation behind MEFTA is not primarily economic. Rather it was seen as a method of winning ‘hearts and minds’ by creating greater prosperity and peace through trade, whilst laying the foundations for liberal reform in the region. It therefore attempted to boost US trade with the 20 MEFTA countries, which accounts for less than 4% of US exports and less than 5% of US imports. The dominant US imports from the region are oil, gas and textiles. Of all the yearly *consumed* oil and gas in the US, 10% is imported from the MENA, which consequently totals 53% of all imports from the region. The next largest import is textiles, which totals 15% of all imports from the MEFTA countries. Conversely, US exports to MEFTA countries are heavily concentrated on

machinery and transportation equipment, which respectively account for 24% and 21% of total exports to the region (Bolle 2006: 4-7; see Lawrence 2006b: 95-106).

In addition to envisaged economic benefits, MEFTA sought to work with MEPI to use FTAs as a democratising tool, by promoting structural, economic and governance reforms. Accordingly, trade promotion and trade-related technical assistance programmes were established, focusing on teaching better methods of making government regulation transparent, promoting the rule of contract law, and protecting intellectual property (see Wittes 2008b: 85-92).

### **The Broader Middle East North Africa Initiative**

The US launched the *Broader Middle East and North Africa* initiative during its 2004 G8 presidency, intending to add a multilateral dimension to the *forward strategy of freedom*. The initiative was the product of a working paper which suggested that the G8 create a *Greater Middle East Initiative*<sup>8</sup> (GMEI), which agreed upon a set of common reform priorities towards the MENA. This attempted to replicate many of MEPI's ambitions and tried to create a multilateral goal of 'promoting democracy and good governance, building a knowledge society, and expanding economic opportunities' for the MENA. As a result, the BMENA initiative was marketed as a 'partnership' between the G8, the US, and European nations, with the governments, business and civil society of the MENA region. Through what was described as 'genuine co-operation', BMENA officials asserted that the initiative would 'strengthen freedom, democracy and prosperity for all' in the region (see G8-BMENA 2006; DOS 2004).

The central initiative that emerged from the June 2004 Sea Island summit was the *Forum*

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<sup>8</sup> The GMEI was the original name given to BMENA. The name was changed due to objections that came from MENA governments.

*for the Future*. This was intended to be an annual meeting in which governments, business and civil society groups from the G8 and MENA would meet and discuss reform measures. The first of these meetings took place in December 2004 in Morocco, the second in November 2005 in Bahrain, the third in December 2006 in Jordan, and the fourth in 2008 in the United Arab Emirates. Although there was intended to be a forum in Yemen in 2007 this was not held because of US efforts to rejuvenate Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at the Annapolis Conference in Maryland (Wittes 2008b: 96).

In addition to the *Forum for the Future*, the BMENA initiative was comprised of several small multinational and national projects. Out of the subsequent *Forums for the Future* four main ‘working groups’ were established:

- ‘Tax Administration and Policy’; led by Egypt
- ‘Financial Systems’ combining Banking System, Financial Sector Reform and Regulation, Financial Services, and Capital Market Development; led by Bahrain
- ‘Microfinance’; led by Jordan
- ‘Financing Poverty Alleviation’; led by Yemen. (see G8-BMENA 2006)

In addition to these developments and private enterprise endeavours, the BMENA initiative attempted to promote literacy by creating ‘The Literacy Hub’. This was designed to provide policymakers and programme developers in the BMENA region with an extensive database of exemplary practices and programmes in literacy (see LiteracyHub 2008).

A further multilateral dynamic that the BMENA initiative launched was the *Foundation for the Future*. Announced in November 2005, the foundation was intended to pool and distribute international funds to nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in the region. As Condoleezza Rice announced at the 2005 *Forum for the Future*:

The Foundation will provide grants to help civil society strengthen the rule of law, to protect basic civil liberties, and ensure greater opportunity for health and education. But most importantly, the Foundation is a sign that citizens have to be trusted who are working for democratic reform in particular countries, and cities, and villages to use their grant money for the greatest good that they see fit (Rice 2005\_12\_12).

The largest donations to this fund have come from the US, which in FY2006 dedicated \$35 Million of MEPIs funding to the foundation, but other donors included Denmark, the European Commission, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Jordan, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (FFF 2008; Wittes 2008b: 97). In total the fund raised approximately \$60 million, and by the year end of 2008 the foundation had a net total of \$26 million in available assets for future projects (FFF 2009: 43-54; DOS 2009; Sharp 2005a).

### **The ADVANCE Democracy Act of 2007 and the National Security Presidential Directive-58**

At a bureaucratic level the Freedom Agenda has led to the creation of new institutions and policies, predominantly in the form of the MEPI, the MEFTA and the BMENA initiative. Yet there is also an additional legislative layer in which the Freedom Agenda has manifested itself and been formally institutionalised. Notably this has been done through the ADVANCE Democracy Act of 2007<sup>9</sup> (ADA). This act has largely been ignored or erroneously represented within current literature on the Freedom Agenda. In James Traub's book *The Freedom Agenda*, published in September 2008, it was even asserted that the bill 'never became law' (2008: 227). However, on August 3, 2007, as part of H.R.1. *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*, ADA was ratified<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> This acronym stands for *Advance Democratic Values, Address Nondemocratic Countries, and Enhance Democracy Act*.

<sup>10</sup> See H.R.1 Public Law 110-53, 22 USC 8201n; Title XXI, Sections 2101-62, as passed by the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The significance of ADA is multifaceted. The bill was originally proposed in 2005, sponsored by Representative Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) in the House, and Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) in the Senate. Notably this legislation was inspired by and attributed to Mark Palmer's book *Breaking the Real Axis of Evil: How to Oust the World's Last Dictators by 2025* (see Lantos 2005; Palmer 2003). Accordingly, ADA asserts that:

It is the policy of the United States to promote freedom and democracy in foreign countries as a fundamental component of United States foreign policy, along with other key foreign policy goals<sup>11</sup> (ADA 2007: 22 USC 8202).

The importance of this is that 'the act for the first time declares with the force of law that supporting democracy and human rights abroad shall be a fundamental component of U.S. foreign policy' (Mann 2007).

To reflect this objective the ADA legislated changes throughout the US foreign policy bureaucracy. The first of these was the creation of the a *Democracy Liaison Office* (DLO), with new officers to serve under the supervision of the Assistant Secretary of State. The ADA did not prescribe the exact institutional location that these officers would be situated. However, the legislation did account for the possibility of posting Democracy Liaison Officers to regional diplomacy offices, multilateral organisations, and US combatant commands (ADA 2007: 22 USC 8211).

Additionally, the ADA formally instructed Chiefs of Mission in nondemocratic and democratic transition countries to:

Develop, as part of annual program planning, a strategy to promote democratic principles, practices, and values in each such foreign country and to provide support, as appropriate, to nongovernmental organizations, individuals, and

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<sup>11</sup> The line "along with other key foreign policy goals" was not in the 2005 version of the bill submitted to the House and Senate.

movements in each such country that are committed to democratic principles, practices, and values<sup>12</sup> (ADA 2007: 22 USC 8211).

These instructions were accompanied by orders to publicly condemn violations of internationally recognised human rights, to visit local landmarks associated with non-violent protest, and to meet with government leaders to discuss human rights and democratisation.

The ADA also required:

- The creation of a *Democracy Fellowship Program* to allow DOS officers to work with relevant congressional committees, NGOs and multilateral organisations. The aim of this was to ‘enable officers of the Department [DOS] to gain an additional perspective on democracy promotion in foreign countries’ (ADA 2007: 22 USC 8212).
- Enhanced training for Foreign Service Officers on protecting human rights and supporting democratisation.
- Making support for democracy and human rights a criterion for awards, performance pay, and promotions within the DOS.
- Establishing an Office for Multilateral Democracy Promotion.
- The change of title for the annual report on *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record*, to the *Annual Report on Advancing Freedom and Democracy*.
- The payment of \$14 million from the US to the United Nation’s Democracy Fund.

In addition to these official requirements, the ADA also presented a ‘sense of Congress’:

- Urging the Community of Democracies to establish a headquarters and formalise its organisation.
- Urging USAID and the Secretary of State to develop guidelines to direct and coordinate U.S. democracy promotion efforts.
- Commended the Secretary of State for creating an *Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion*<sup>13</sup> (ACDP), and asserted that this committee ‘should play a

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<sup>12</sup> Definitions of nondemocratic and democratic transition countries are provided in the legislation.

<sup>13</sup> The first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Democracy was held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2006. Administration officials that attended were: Condoleezza Rice, Randall L. Tobias (USAID), Paula J. Dobriansky (Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs), Barry F. Lowenkron (DRL), Stephen Krasner (Director of Policy Planning). The ACDP members include: Anne-Marie Slaughter, chair (Princeton University), Lorne Craner (International Republican Institute), Chester Crocker (Georgetown University), Bernard DeLury (formerly of Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service), Aaron Friedberg (Princeton University), Carl Gershman (National Endowment for Democracy), Mary Ann Glendon (Harvard Law School), Donald Horowitz (Duke University), Clifford May (Foundation for the Defense of Democracies), Michael Novak (American Enterprise Institute), Mark Palmer (Council for a Community of Democracies and Freedom House), Richard Soudriette (International Foundation for Election Systems),



significant role in the Department's [DOS] transformational diplomacy' (ADA 2007: 22 USC 8231).

Combined, the steps outlined by the ADA represent a significant attempt to reform the US foreign policy bureaucracy, and heighten considerations of democracy promotion in policy-making. Consequently, the ADA represents an important legal basis for US foreign policy to commit to democracy promotion and build upon the FSFME policy set out by President Bush.

In addition to the ADA, the Bush administration codified the policies and practices of the Freedom Agenda on the July 17 2008 in *National Security Presidential Directive* (NSPD) 58. Although the exact wording of this document is unknown, the Bush administration elected to partially declassify NSPD-58 on October 9, 2008. Entitled *Institutionalising the Freedom Agenda*, NSPD-58 states that,

It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world. This policy goal was established and elaborated in the 2006 National Security Strategy of the United States of America, which declares the promotion of freedom, justice, human dignity, and effective democratic institutions to be central goals of our national security (DOS 2008).

Moreover, building on the ADA's legislative provisions, NSPD-58 calls for:

- Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officials meeting with foreign leaders to communicate consistently the US priority on democracy promotion.
- The Secretary of State, in coordination with other departments and agencies, to establish stronger cooperation with other democratic countries; to promote fundamental freedoms, develop, adopt, and pursue strategies to advance common interests through new and existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, and provide political, economic, security, and other support to fellow and new democracies (DOS 2008).

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Vin Weber (National Endowment for Democracy), Jennifer Windsor (Freedom House), Richard Williamson (Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw), and Kenneth Wollack (National Democratic Institute) (see DOS 2006a; Rice 2006\_11\_06; Milbank 2007).

## **Summary of the Freedom Agenda**

Although the desire to spread democracy is not a new phenomena in US foreign policy, the Freedom Agenda represented a new approach to US-MENA relations with democracy promotion as a core objective. It asserted a “forward leaning” approach to reforming the nature of MENA states politically, socially and economically. Indeed, as shown above, the Freedom Agenda demonstrated concrete attempts to divert and utilise American resources, capabilities and foreign and security policy instruments towards promoting democracy and reforming the MENA. At a military and nation-building level, the policy had the goal of establishing a free and democratic Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the policy also sought to combine foreign policy tools such as the presidential pulpit and diplomatic pressure, with new institutions in the form of MEPI, MEFTA and the BMENA initiative. Furthermore, through the legislative process the Bush administration was able to create a legal basis for a liberal grand strategy. In effect, the promotion of democracy in the MENA was represented as fundamental to American national security and in the nation’s interest. As a direct consequence of this, institutional changes followed that significantly impacted the DOS and USAID in particular but also impacted the US foreign policy bureaucracy more widely. Accordingly, the Freedom Agenda merits further analysis because it provides an institutional legacy for the Obama administration, which took office in January 2009.

## **2. The ‘Conflict of Interests’ Problematic, and a History of Promoting the Status Quo**

The decision to advocate freedom and democracy in the MENA challenged decades of US foreign policy. That President Bush challenged the historical conduct of past policy was in and of itself a rare admission of failure, which reflected a serious conceptual change concerning US-MENA relations. Notably, President G. W. Bush accepted a consistent pattern in US foreign and security policy towards the region:

In the name of stability and anti-communism, the United States regularly and overtly backed dictators, and monarchs, providing diplomatic, military, and economic assistance to bolster these autocrats against enemies both foreign and domestic (Wittes 2008b: 16).

To point out the obvious implications of the President’s admission, since the steady growth of American involvement in the MENA from 1945, the US has tried to control events in the region. To this extent, it is widely acknowledged that the US has slowly taken over Britain’s historical ‘oversight role’ and ‘security management services’ of the region (Boot 2004: 47; Murden 2002: 43). That this role began during the Second World War is not a coincidence. Not only did it coincide with the decline of the British and French imperial regime’s ‘moments’ in the Middle East<sup>14</sup>, but also with the rise of the US as a global superpower and the onset of the Cold War.

### **Long-Term Interests: Stability for Oil, Bases and Israel**

It was during World War II itself that the geopolitical orientation of the MENA was for the first time seen as vital to US interests; through both the need to maintain a supply corridor to the Soviet Union through Iran, and as a staging ground to invade Italy from North Africa. Yet, it was in the war’s aftermath and the accompanying new international

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<sup>14</sup> Although Britain and France retained influence in the region into the 1960s and the 1970s, their place as the hegemonic external powers was gradually being eroded by the US (Halliday 2005: 95).

order, that subsequent US administrations increasingly began to define US interests as intrinsically linked to the fate of the MENA region. As Alan R. Taylor notes,

The overriding concern of American foreign policy in the immediate postwar period was finding an effective way to check Soviet expansion throughout the world. When applied to the Middle East, this meant using all means available to prevent the Russians from filling the power vacuum being created by the incipient withdrawal of the old colonial powers (1991: 49).

In the post-war milieu, containment became the dominant US strategic doctrine, which consequently impacted upon US-MENA relations. The first sign of this creeping insurrection occurred over the issue of post-war Soviet retention of troops in Northern Iran<sup>15</sup> (see Truman 1956: 98; 100-1). This subsequently expanded into concerns over the Turko-Iranian border, Turkish sovereignty and ultimately the geopolitical orientation of the entire Middle East. Reacting to the July 1946 note from Moscow to Turkey, proposing a new Turkish-Russian defence structure to control the Dardanelles, President Truman argued:

The Russians, in addition to their efforts to outflank Turkey through Iran, were beginning to exert pressure on Turkey for territorial concessions...This was indeed an open bid to obtain control of Turkey ... To allow Russia to set up bases in the Dardanelles or to bring troops into Turkey, ostensibly for the defense of the straits, would, in the natural course of events, result in Greece and the whole Near and Middle East falling under Soviet control (1956: 102).

In response to these events a “patience and firmness” strategy was adopted, which ultimately transformed itself in the Truman doctrine (Gaddis 1982: 22-3). This established for the first time, and albeit focused on the ‘northern tier’, a situation in which the US would actively endeavour to strengthen its own position in the MENA<sup>16</sup> whilst containing Soviet advances. Towards this aim, the US increasingly asserted the need for

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<sup>15</sup> This broke an agreement made at the London conference of Ministers in September 1945. It had been agreed that Soviet troop withdrawal would be completed no later than 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1946 (Truman 1956: 98).

<sup>16</sup> This was originally done in partnership with Britain until the 1950s. Spurred by the failure to establish either the Middle East Command or the Middle East Defence Organisation US officials increasingly questioned the ability of Britain to protect Western interests in the region (see Hahn 2005: 15). The 1956 Suez Crisis exacerbated this, leading to the US taking a ‘leadership’ role and becoming the primary ‘western’ power in the region.

stability and the maintenance of the established political order in the region throughout the Cold War. The regional status quo was favoured to the extent that it was perceived to benefit US interests, even if this meant challenging the internal dynamics emerging from the region. This was certainly the case with the 1953 CIA engineered coup of Mohammed Mossadegh and the reinstatement of Mohammad Reza Shah in Iran (see Kinzer 2003; Pollack 2004: 40-80). In a similar vein, the Eisenhower doctrine led to the interventions in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq through the 1957-8 period, with the aim of maintaining the regional status quo and winning American influence in the region. This status quo policy was pursued by successive administrations throughout the Cold War; culminating in President Carter advising the Shah of Iran to use force to crush the 1979 Islamic revolution to maintain 'an island of stability', and President Reagan asserting that 'I will not permit [Saudi Arabia] to be an Iran' after US trained Saudi Arabian SANG forces crushed an anti-regime uprising in 1981 (see Hahn 2005: 42-43, 70-85; Zunes 2003: 15; Freedman 2008: 63-149). Accordingly, to fortify this counterrevolutionary policy in the early stages of the Cold War, the US demonstrated willingness to condone and participate in both coercion and subversion.

In addition to directly violent methods of securing stability and the maintenance of the established political order, the US also sought to pursue a status quo policy through foreign and military assistance. The genealogical origins of this, in US-MENA relations, lay with the precedent set by the Truman doctrine's aid packages to Greece and Turkey. With this as a model, President Eisenhower declared his own doctrine to a joint session of Congress on January 5, 1957. Approved in March the same year, Congress authorised the Eisenhower administration to use force if necessary to protect American interests in the Middle East. However, this was coupled with \$200 million in economic aid to support any nation in the Middle East 'requesting assistance against armed aggression

from any country controlled by international communism'. This was substantially less than the \$400 million originally intended by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who retained the idea that economic aid would be used 'as a means of building our position in the Middle East'<sup>17</sup> (Little 2004: 132-7; Yaqub 2004; Heiss 2006). Commenting at the time, Milton Friedman observed:

The President is empowered to make payments to certain countries, particularly in the Middle East, the purpose of which is to induce the recipient countries to support particular policies that are thought to be in our interest - these are, in essence, straight military or political subsidies (Friedman 1958 [1995]: 3).

As a method of securing stability and influence, economic and military aid to the MENA has waxed and waned but continues to the present day. From 1950 to 1970 both economic and military aid to the region totalled a sum of \$7,845 million<sup>18</sup>. This figure takes into account the 80% drop in foreign assistance between 1965 and 1970, which was the result of the June 1967 War and the impact of the war in Vietnam. Yet these sums are meagre in comparison to the dramatic rise in foreign assistance that accompanied the 1970s, and would continue into the 2000s. From 1971 to 2001 economic and military aid to the region totalled a sum of \$144,969 million<sup>19</sup>, representing over a 1800% increase (see Sharp 2006b).

During the Cold War foreign assistance packages to the MENA were portrayed as necessary for containing communism. The assumption was that patronage could be bought and foreign aid used as a bargaining chip to stop key strategic countries like Egypt, Jordan, Iran and Syria falling under Soviet influence. In effect, it provided a less direct means of confronting the Soviet Union than military intervention, which would

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<sup>17</sup> For a systematic analysis of how economic aid was conceptualised from 1947 through to the 1970s see Robert A. Packenham (1973) *Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science*.

<sup>18</sup> This figure is in current year millions and combines loans and grants given to 'Near East' countries.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

have increased the risk of escalating the Cold War (see Banfield 1963). An added virtue of the foreign assistance method was that it was perceived as a development policy that would strengthen the Western block. Indeed a predominant assumption in America at the time was that 'communism flows from poverty' (Packenham 1973: 52). As a logical corollary of this, economic aid was portrayed as a method of combating communism by helping raise the living standards in less developed areas and making communism less attractive. In turn, raising living standards would also bolster the Western powers, by laying the foundations of 'world prosperity, political freedom, and international cooperation' (Packenham 1973: 50-51). That foreign assistance to the MENA continued in the post-Cold War era, is testimony to the fact that it also sought to guarantee perceived US interests in the region that continue.

Despite the US having no other superpower challenging their hegemonic power over the region in the post-Cold War era, reasons for America to intervene in the region remain. Accordingly there are a set of interests that the US consistently maintains, which could be jeopardised by regional instability. Notably geography has played a distinctive role. The reason for this was recognised as early as 1945 by the State Department, that described the Middle East as 'a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history' (in Zunes 2003: 2). This was a far cry from earlier assertions by the State Department in 1923 that the region 'is of little commercial importance' (Oren 2007: 407). The fundamental distinction between these two quotes relates to the role of oil in the region and the manner in which it began transforming the world in the early twentieth century. Accelerated industrialisation combined with an increasing demand on oil dependent consumer goods, such as automobiles and electrification of households in the United States, played an unprecedented role. Moreover, what became apparent from both World Wars was that oil was playing a

decisive factor in providing “longlegs” to military personal and faster vehicles, consequently, providing a strategic advantage in warfare. To quote the young Winston Churchill’s enduring principle, which referred to the use of oil instead of coal on British warships; ‘Mastery itself is the prize’ (Yergin 1993).

Notably, by 1947 oil producing MENA states provided half of the oil consumed by the US armed forces, which led to the CIA deeming Middle Eastern oil ‘essential to the security of the United States’ (in Hahn 2005: 7). Yet, oil from the region was playing a much more important strategic role by fuelling the revitalisation of Western European economies. As one US government report commented at the time ‘without petroleum the Marshall plan could not have functioned’ (Yergin 1991: 424). This was due to the fact that in the post-war era a fundamental transition in Europe took place, in which coal-based economies transitioned to importing oil<sup>20</sup>. This helped produce a symbiotic confluence of events in which European needs and the development of Middle Eastern oil combined. Thus, by 1955 approximately 90 percent of oil consumed in Western Europe came from the Middle East (Hahn 2005: 7; see Kapstein 1990; Yergin 1991: 425). From the American perspective, Middle Eastern oil was now fundamental to the material balance of the world, and in its efforts to create an integrated transatlantic market system.

The twenty-first century still bears the marks of the post-war decision to move from coal power to oil. As Kenneth Pollack has argued:

The reason the United States has a legitimate and critical interest in seeing that Persian Gulf oil continues to flow copiously and relatively cheaply is simply that the global economy built over the last 50 years rests on a foundation of inexpensive, plentiful oil, and if that foundation were removed, the global

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<sup>20</sup> In 1955 coal provided 75 percent of total energy use in Western Europe, and petroleum just 23 percent. By 1972, coal’s share had shrunk to 22 percent, while oil’s had risen to 60 percent. This was almost a complete reversal (Yergin 1991: 545).



economy would collapse (2003: 3).

Furthermore, in today's highly technological hydrocarbon society the demand for oil is increasing, and the Middle East contains around 66 per cent of the world's known oil reserves (Milton-Edwards 2006: 73). Of particular concern to the United States is that in the intermediate future 'oil supply is expected to continue to concentrate in the Persian Gulf, which holds the world's largest geologically attractive reserves' (CFR 2006: 22). The cause of America's concern is that the highly industrial US economy is becoming more dependent on oil for growth. The United States, with only 4.3 percent of the world's population, uses 25 percent of the world's oil, and significantly 60 percent of this need is dependent on import and expected to rise in the coming decades (CFR 2006: 22). Yet, as consumption is increasing, America's domestic production is decreasing. Consequently, making the US significantly dependent on foreign oil from places such as Saudi Arabia, which provides 20 per cent of America's crude oil imports (Milton-Edwards 2006: 239). As Beverley Milton-Edwards argues:

The maintenance and future growth of the American economy owes much to the import of oil from the Middle East. In this way unimpeded access to that resource is vital to national interest. If there were any doubt that this were not the case, the Arab oil embargo during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, although it occurred more than thirty years ago, remains fresh in the collective consciousness of American policy-makers (2006: 239).

In addition to American demand for oil, however, the region's resources are also increasingly being claimed by expanding global economic powers such as India and China. Indeed, the Chinese government is pursuing a strategy of "locking up" particular supplies for the Chinese market, and is aligning its relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran in order to secure these exclusive oil supplies. This is a direct challenge to American hegemony in the region and is impacting Middle Eastern politics more widely (see Pace 2008: 162-3; Salameh 2003; Jaffe and Lewis 2002; Xu 2000; Rubin 1999: 49-50). The effect of this is that US influence in the region is diminishing; which has caused foreign

policy analysts such as Henry Kissinger to predict potential international conflicts over hydrocarbon resources to occur in the future (see Leverett and Bader 2005: 187; Ikenberry 2008). This demonstrates that concerns over the material balance of the world and the geopolitical orientation of the Middle East are as strong in the twenty-first century as they were in the Cold War era. With oil being linked to the “American way of life”, economic growth and strategic military power, the consequences of instability or a loss of regional hegemony are intricately linked to American’s global position.

The geographical location of the Middle East also plays a distinctive role in wider military-strategic concerns of the US. Previous to the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles in the 1960s, the US enjoyed a significant strategic advantage over the USSR by having allies that bordered the Soviet Union. This gave the US the potential power to invade its rival from Turkey or Iran, whilst the Soviets had no comparable access to the United States (Sluglett 2005: 43). More widely, throughout the Cold War, military bases were seen as a strategic advantage essential to winning a direct conflict with the Soviet Union. Not only would they have provided the ability to launch aerial offensives, but they also allowed the build up of troops for a ground invasion and the positioning of intelligence gathering personnel and equipment for covert operations (see Cohen 1997: 1-94).

Significantly, although the threat of war with the Soviet Union passed, the Middle East remains an important strategic location for American defence interests. Military bases in the region could provide a method of projecting American military might in future conflicts with rising powers. With bases in the Middle East, the US would be able to strike China from the west, as well as from eastern bases in the Pacific. Whilst this represents an ‘external’ dynamic to the projection of US military power from the region,

there are also ‘internal’ and ‘inter-regional’ strategic concerns. With potential political unrest in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries<sup>21</sup>, the dilemma represented by Iran’s nuclear weapons programme, and the instability in Iraq there is a perceived need to maintain a military presence in the region (see Pollack 2003, 2004; Sick et al. 2008; Cordesman 2008). Furthermore, the MENA has been considered part of an ‘arc of instability’ and a ‘breeding ground for threats’ to US interests (NMS 2004: 5). In the 2005 *National Defense Strategy* (NDS), the US declared the objective of securing ‘strategic access’ and retaining ‘global freedom of action’. The logic underlying this is simple, ‘the United States cannot influence that which it cannot reach’ (NDS 2005: 6; also see Posch 2006). The overall result of this is, as the highly influential *Council on Foreign Relations* has concluded:

Even if the Persian Gulf did not have the bulk of the world’s readily available oil reserves, there would be reasons to maintain a substantial military capability in the region ... At least for the next two decades ... the United States should expect and support a strong military posture that permits suitably rapid deployment to the region, if required (CFR 2006: 29-30).

In addition to the region’s oil supply and military strategic concerns, the US has also held a historical interest in maintaining the security of Israel. At times the US-Israeli ‘special relationship’ has conflicted with the goal of securing the region’s oil, by antagonising the populations of other regional allies. However, the extent of the relationship is visible in the vast quantity of foreign assistance that Israel has received. Notably since France withdrew its assistance to Israel, in protest of the pre-emptive launch of the June 1967 War, the US has stepped into a patron role (Sharp 2006b: 5; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 53; Bowen 2005: 55). From 1971 to 2008, the US has given foreign assistance to Israel at an average rate of \$2 billion per year<sup>22</sup>, making it the ‘largest annual recipient of US aid and the largest recipient of cumulative US assistance since World War II’ (Mark

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<sup>21</sup> GCC countries include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

<sup>22</sup> Assistance from the US has consisted of two thirds military assistance to one third economic aid.

2006: 2-21; Sharp 2006b: 5). Martin Indyk has described the relationship as an ‘asymmetric relationship in which we [the US] are “big brother”, the superpower, and they [Israel] are the small regional power’ (1998: 81).

A clear turning point in the US-Israeli relationship, and in the US-Egyptian relationship, was the signing of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in 1979. This was the result of secret negotiations and the signing of the Camp David Accords, which ushered in the current era of financial support for stability between Israel and its Arab neighbours (Milton-Edwards 2006: 247). As a consequence, Israel became the highest recipient of US aid and Egypt the second highest recipient. Combined, these two countries currently receive almost 93 percent of all annual funding to the region (Sharp 2006b: 7). Since this period the US has remained “engaged” in the peace process as a “peace broker”, but remained committed to strengthening Israel.

The sum of these concerns, securing the free flow of oil, maintaining a military presence and securing the integrity of regional allies such as Israel, has contributed to what Tamara Coffman Wittes has termed the ‘conflict-of-interests’ problem at the heart of US-MENA relations (2008: 18). On one-hand, the Bush administration asserted the need for regional reform through democratisation, and, on the other, more traditional interests existed. Conspicuously, although the Freedom Agenda was portrayed as ‘challenging’ past policy, these long term historical interests remained, providing the strategically selective context in which the Freedom Agenda had to navigate. The effect of this has been to create a rigorous debate concerning the merits of promoting democracy, versus maintaining the established stability approach to US-MENA relations.

### **3. The Democracy Consensus and its Discontents**

On September 18, 2007 *Intelligence Squared US*, a debating forum initiated by The Rosenkranz Foundation and sponsored by media partners such as *Newsweek* and *NPR*, held an Oxford style debate in New York City<sup>23</sup>. The motion being put forward was that “Spreading democracy in the Middle East is a bad idea”. This event is notable because of the highly esteemed panel members arguing both for, and against, the motion. Arguing for the motion was Flynt Leverett<sup>24</sup>, Dimitri Simes<sup>25</sup> and Shibley Telhami<sup>26</sup>. Arguing against the motion, and therefore in favour of promoting democracy in the Middle East, was Elizabeth Cheney<sup>27</sup>, Danielle Pletka<sup>28</sup> and Natan Sharansky<sup>29</sup>. Of particular interest is the fact that Flynt Leverett and Elizabeth Cheney were on opposing sides. This not only demonstrated the tensions that existed within the Bush administration, but also reservations about the Freedom Agenda more widely.

Flynt Leverett had served as Senior Director for Middle East Affairs at the National Security Council (2002-03) and as a Middle East expert on the Secretary of State’s Policy

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<sup>23</sup> An Oxford style debate consists of one motion, one moderator, two to three advocates for the motion, two to three against.

<sup>24</sup> From March 2002 to March 2003, Flynt Leverett served as the senior director for Middle East affairs on the National Security Council (NSC). Prior to serving on the NSC, he was a counter-terrorism expert on the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, and before that he served as a CIA senior analyst for eight years.

<sup>25</sup> Dimitri Simes is president of *The Nixon Center* and publisher of the foreign policy journal *The National Interest*. He also served as an informal policy adviser to Richard Nixon, who appointed him to lead the center.

<sup>26</sup> Shibley Telhami is the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, and a nonresident senior fellow of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Cheney has formally served as Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State for Assistance to the former Soviet Union, and as a USAID officer in U.S. embassies in Budapest and Warsaw. In 2002, Cheney was appointed to the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and given control of MEPI. After two years of service, Cheney left her first State Department post in 2003 to serve in her father Richard Cheney’s re-election campaign. In February 2005, she returned to the US State Department and was appointed the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State For Near Eastern Affairs and Coordinator for BMENA initiatives.

<sup>28</sup> Danielle Pletka is vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Pletka is also involved in various other projects such as the Committee on the Present Danger. Formerly, she was a senior professional staff member for Near East and South Asia with the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations from 1992 to 2002.

<sup>29</sup> Natan Sharansky is a former Soviet dissident, human rights activist, Israeli politician and author.

Planning Staff (2001-02). He asserted that:

In arguing that spreading democracy in the Middle East is a bad idea, my colleagues and I want to look at tonight's resolution through the prism of American national interests. Of course US interests in the Middle East are complex and multifaceted, but I'm gonna boil down our most important interests in this critical region to three things. First, the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, second, the security and welfare of the state of Israel, and third, keeping the Middle East from providing a platform for further mass-casualty terrorist attacks of the sort that we suffered on 9-11 ... I believe that promoting democracy in the Middle East is not just not helpful for these interests, it is downright harmful to them (IQ2 2007).

This was a clear juxtaposition to Elizabeth Cheney, who argued that:

The truth is that spreading democracy in the Middle East is not a bad idea nor is it a failed idea. Nor is it an idea that would have been good except that George W. Bush adopted it. It is, by any objective measure, a good idea, the right idea and a necessary policy choice for America today ... For too many years America perpetuated this status quo. We supported those authoritarian regimes; we ignored the aspirations of their people. This policy, essentially the one that our opponents would have us return to tonight, brought only a false sense of security and stability (IQ2 2007).

Throughout the debate, contentions over perceived US interests were drawn out. For those that thought democracy promotion was a bad idea, the Freedom Agenda was defined as a 'dangerous' approach to international affairs. There have been many critics of the Freedom Agenda and the idea of promoting democracy in the Middle East. For those that thought promoting democracy was a good idea, it was not only seen as a method of combating terrorism, but portrayed as the only policy option left for the US to adopt.

### **The Freedom Agenda's Critics**

Debating the merits of democracy promotion is often abstract and fraught with perils. Furthermore, the debate about democracy promotion is often structured in such a way as to make criticism particularly difficult; if it is "freedom" and "democracy" that are being

exported, rather than allowing rule by tyrannical despots, then like apple pie and parenthood, how can anyone be against it? This observation is important because it serves as a precautionary note; to take arguments against democracy promotion seriously, and not to succumb to the straw man fallacy. This fallacy has been highly present in current literature on the Freedom Agenda, and also been a rhetorical tactic deployed by the Bush administration to defend the Freedom Agenda.

Outright opposition to the Freedom Agenda has come from a wide and varied range of proponents. However, many of the arguments presented overlap and can be broken down into a series of four core objections to democracy promotion in the Middle East:

1. The “Islamist dilemma”.
2. Promoting democracy in the Middle East may cause regional instability.
3. Promoting democracy does not weaken terrorist organisations like Al Qaeda, because they rely on ideological appeal and are not a product of political or economic marginalisation. They do not rely on a lack of democracy or poverty to recruit future terrorists.
4. The US is a discredited actor and by promoting democracy may harm indigenous groups promoting democratic reform.

The “Islamist dilemma” has been a dominant argument summoned in order to reject promoting democracy in the MENA. At its core lies an empirical observation; throughout the MENA, Islamists have established themselves as major political players and currently represent the only viable opposition forces to existing undemocratic regimes (see Sharp 2006a). Consequently, as many have argued, ‘should free and fair elections be held in the Middle East tomorrow, it would be likely that radical religious

forces [sic] would win a sweeping victory in many countries' (Neep 2004: 82; Byman 2007: 143-4). This is seen as problematic because it could result in the "one person, one vote, one time" scenario, in addition to helping the formation of "Islamic" states. The creation of such states raises the spectre of the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the prospect of hostility towards American interests. It is still common place to ask the questions 'will country X be another Iran? Is so-and-so another Ayatollah Khomeini?' (Esposito and Voll 1996: 150). Accordingly, as many critics of the Freedom Agenda have illustrated:

The problem with promoting democracy in the Arab world is not that Arabs do not like democracy; it is that Washington probably would not like the governments Arab democracy would produce ... Assuming that democratic Arab governments would better represent the opinions of their people than do the current Arab regimes, democratisation of the Arab world should produce more anti-U.S. foreign policies (Gause III 2005).

Proponents of this argument often cite the events of 1989-91 and its aftermath in Algeria, as evidence for their position. In response to outside pressure and the desire for internal stability the single ruling party in Algeria, the *Front de Liberation Nationale* (FLN), began making attempts at pluralism in 1989. Through constitutional changes the FLN monopoly on the state apparatus was to be ended and a competitive multiparty system established. However, as a direct result the *Islamic Salvation Front* (FIS) swept to victory in municipal and later parliamentary elections. Resultantly, an Islamic movement had come to power 'not through bullets but through ballots, not by violent revolution but by working within the system' (Esposito and Voll 1996: 150; 150-72; Burgat 2003: 102-21). In January 1992, the military decided that the Algerian people had 'voted unwisely' and that the FIS had 'hijacked democracy'. This led to military intervention, that amounted to a de facto coup, and a civil conflict that reversed the political openings made throughout 1989 to 1991 (see Quandt 2003; Willis 1999).



For many proponents, the Islamist dilemma argument was vindicated throughout the 2005-6 period. Chiefly, this was caused by the electoral victory of Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya ( Hamas)<sup>30</sup> in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections. This represented a pattern of Islamic groups, hostile to Washington and Israel, winning significant gains through elections in the ‘Arab Spring’ period, which included the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Shiites backed by militias in Iraq (Weisman 2006a). This was coupled with the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon and increasing civil violence in Iraq despite hopes that the elections would calm the insurgency (Kurth 2006). These events allowed some proponents of the Islamist dilemma argument to draw a further historical analogy with Hitler’s rise to power through democratic elections. Thus, as Dimitri Simes has argued,

I will not hesitate to say that there are some things that are more important than democracy. If ... in the 1930s, we knew what Hitler would do to the Jews and to the others, would we allow him to come to power democratically? ... I completely agree with the Israelis now when they would not want to recognise democratically elected Hamas (IQ2 2007).

In addition to the Islamist dilemma argument being propagated by some of the US foreign policy commentariat, it has also been voiced within the MENA region. Within the region itself autocrats have regularly depicted Islamists as the only viable alternative to their own autocratic rule. This has served their interests by generating support for autocratic rule from Western governments and by striking a “stability bargain” with sections of their own societies, which see Islamists as a threat (Feldman 2004: 19-25; Deeb 2008). Accordingly, as Noah Feldman has noted:

The optimal strategy for the autocrats is therefore to eliminate secular democratic dissent, keeping just enough Islamist opposition alive to make Islamism the only alternative without enabling it to become strong enough to overthrow the government (2004: 23).

A second dominant argument summoned in order to reject promoting democracy in the

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<sup>30</sup>This Arabic acronym translates as “Islamic Resistance Movement”.

MENA, has been the assertion that promoting democracy may cause greater regional instability and conflict. This argument has been widely asserted and strongly influenced by Mansfield and Snyder's book *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies go to War* (see Epstein, Serafino, and Miko 2007: 8; Smith 2007: 159-61; Traub 2008: 7; Kaye et al. 2008: 25; Owen 2005). The thrust of the argument directly challenges the manner in which democratic peace theory has been portrayed by the Bush administration. Whilst Mansfield and Snyder acknowledge that 'no mature democracies have ever fought a war against each other', they argue that 'in the short run ... the beginning stages of transitions to democracy often give rise to war rather than peace' (2005: 1-2). Moreover, in agreement with Fareed Zakaria's (2004) analysis in *The Future of Freedom* and Samuel Huntington's (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Mansfield and Snyder argue that 'rising political participation leads to conflict and instability in states with weak political institutions' (2005: 13). However, this assertion is explicated, and provides an insight for understanding instability and conflict "within" states and "between" states.

For those that opposed the war in Iraq, the implications of this study directly challenge the Bush administration. Thus, Tony Smith has pointed out,

If Mansfield and Snyder are correct, their findings deliver a body blow to the facile assumption of the Bush Doctrine that terrorism is more likely to come under control in the Middle East as a result of the conquest of Iraq followed by its democratisation. Indeed, exactly the opposite seems likely (2007: 159).

Moreover, when Mansfield and Snyder's findings are applied to the MENA, and vis-à-vis the Freedom Agenda, they argue that 'democratising the Arab states is a major political gamble in the war on terror' (2005: 278). The reasoning behind this is worth quoting at length,

Although democratisation in the Islamic world might contribute to peace in the very long run, Islamic public opinion in the short run is, in most places, hostile to the United States, reluctant to condemn terrorism and supportive of forceful measures to achieve favourable results in Palestine, Kashmir and other disputed

areas. Although much of the belligerence of the Islamic publics fueled by resentment of the U.S.-backed authoritarian regimes under which many of them live, simply renouncing these authoritarians and pressing for a quick democratic opening is unlikely to lead to peaceful democratic consolidations. On the contrary, unleashing Islamic mass opinion through sudden democratisation could only raise the likelihood of war. All the risk factors are there: the media and civil society groups are inflammatory, as old elites and rising oppositions try to claim the mantle of Islamic or nationalist militancy. The rule of law is weak, and existing corrupt bureaucracies cannot serve a democratic administration properly. The boundaries of states are mismatched with those of nations, making any push for national self-determination fraught with peril (2005: 13).

For those that oppose the Freedom Agenda the notion that emerging democracies in the Middle East may in fact have a destabilising effect on the region is highly problematic. Such instability challenges other US interests and makes securing those interests problematic<sup>31</sup>.

The third argument put forward to reject the Freedom Agenda has been the assertion that promoting democracy and/or reducing poverty do not weaken terrorist organisations like Al Qaeda. They rely on ideological appeal, and therefore a “drain the swamp” approach fails to provide an effective counter-terrorism strategy. Notably, this challenges the core assumption of the Freedom Agenda; that political and economic marginalisation cause the sort of terrorism witnessed on September 11, 2001. The most prominent proponent arguing against this premise is Gregory F. Gause III. His *Foreign Affairs* article *Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?* sparked considerable debate about the Freedom Agenda. The central questions and conclusions presented in this article were:

Is it true that the more democratic a country becomes, the less likely it is to produce terrorists and terrorist groups? In other words, is the security rationale for promoting democracy in the Arab world based on a sound premise? Unfortunately, the answer appears to be no ... [Al Qaeda] are fighting to impose their vision of an Islamic state. Nor is there any evidence that democracy in the Arab world would “drain the swamp”, eliminating soft support for terrorist organisations among the Arab public and reducing the number of potential recruits for them (2005: 62).

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<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that Mansfield and Snyder themselves do not oppose democracy promotion, but rather favour a cautious approach and ‘democratization from above’ (2005: 14; 283).

The implication of Gause's argument is that an absence of democracy is not an underlying "causal factor" leading to the sort of terrorist threat presented on September 11, 2001 (also see Dalacoura 2006). Moreover, as Douglas Borer and Michael Freeman argue, Al Qaeda's goals are to stop the perceived foreign occupation of Islamic lands and to establish Sharia law as a guiding principle of an Islamic caliphate. Democracy promotion is unlikely to satisfy these grievances and may in fact create the perception that Islamic identity and culture are threatened (Borer and Freeman 2007; Freeman 2008; Kaye et al. 2008: 21). Further still, Scott Atran argues that,

Those who believe suicide terrorism can be explained by a single political root cause, such as the presence of foreign military forces or the absence of democracy, ignore psychological motivations (2006: 144).

Significantly, empirical evidence appears to raise serious questions concerning the "democracy deficit - terrorism" and "poverty - terrorism" link. It has been widely demonstrated that the MENA does not have a monopoly on terrorism, and that factors other than a "democratic deficit" and "poverty" play a role (see Hobson 2005: 43; Dalacoura 2006). As Flynt Leverett has argued,

From Osama bin Laden on down, that claim that jihadist terrorists are products of economic and political marginalisation is simply false. The 9-11 hijackers were truly trust-fund terrorists, from economically and politically advantaged backgrounds (IQ2 2007).

Moreover, the phenomena of "home grown" terrorists in democratic states, such as three of the individuals that carried out the July 7 2005 bombings in London, raises further questions about the "democracy deficit - terrorism" and "poverty - terrorism" link presented by the Bush administration.

The impact of questioning the "democracy deficit - terrorism" link has been pronounced. It has led long term proponents of democracy promotion, Francis Fukuyama and Michael

McFaul, to assert that,

The deep sources of terrorism are much more complex than just the Middle East's democratic deficit. One can argue in fact that the modernisation process produces terrorism and that more democracy is likely to exacerbate the terrorism problem, at least in the short run (2007: 30).

This built on Francis Fukuyama's earlier assertion that attacked the Bush administration and the Freedom Agenda directly,

The problem of jihadist terrorism will not be solved by bringing modernisation and democracy to the Middle East. The Bush administration's view that terrorism is driven by a lack of democracy overlooks the fact that so many terrorists were radicalised in democratic European countries. It is highly naïve to think that radical Islamists hate the West because of ignorance of what the West is (2006b: 12).

Notably however, this has not stopped these authors asserting that democracy promotion is a moral good in and of itself, and therefore that the US should enhance the role of democracy promotion in its foreign policy (Fukuyama and McFaul 2007: 34-44).

The fourth argument put forward to reject the Freedom Agenda has been the assertion that the US is a discredited actor. For some, this has been caused by US actions over the last few decades, in which it has 'allied itself with autocratic regimes and has supported Israel against the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people' (Dalacoura 2005: 973). Further still, some have argued that the invasion of Iraq has discredited US democracy promotion efforts. As Shibley Telhami has argued,

In essence, we have given democracy a bad name. It is hard for people in the region, including people who badly and desperately are looking for democracy and freedom, to think of democracy and freedom the American way without thinking about the horrors of Iraq. We have paid a price by diverting attention from the important issue of human rights, which we often confuse with spreading democratic systems. That issue which we should trump and advocate has paid a price as a consequence of this policy (IQ2 2007).

Notably, because the Iraq war was constructed by the Bush administration as a method for promoting democracy in the MENA region, many critics of the Freedom Agenda have argued that US democracy promotion is in disrepute. For example, Strobe Talbott has

argued that “democracy” has become ‘a controversial if not dirty word’ caused by ‘George W. Bush’s invocation of that goal in Iraq and in the Greater Middle East’ (2008: xi-x). This setback to democracy promotion as a cornerstone of American foreign policy has been exacerbated by events in Abu Ghraib prison. Indeed, upon capturing Saddam Hussein, President Bush declared that ‘this event brings further assurance that the torture chambers and the secret police are gone forever’ (2003\_12\_14). Yet months earlier the US had taken over Abu Ghraib prison, which for over 40 years had been a notorious centre for torture under the Ba’ath Party regime in Iraq. Under the prison’s new title, *Baghdad Central Confinement Facility* torture did not stop (see Williams 2006: 7-49). Throughout 2003-4, American military personnel engaged in practices such as, stripping prisoners naked, binding them, sexually abusing them, beating them, menacing and attacking them with dogs, and killing them (see Eisenman 2007: 7).

The visual documentation of these events has been widely broadcast throughout the world, and for many has severely damaged America’s “soft power” (see Nye 2004a; Gardels 2005). Similarly, the use of extraordinary rendition and the role of detention facilities in Guantanamo Bay and beyond, have raised serious credibility questions about the Freedom Agenda (Hassan 2008a; Neep 2004: 79-80). Thus, as Thomas Carothers (2006) has argued:

Even as the president has repeatedly asserted his commitment to a “Freedom Agenda,” he has struck blow after self-inflicted blow against America’s democratic principles and standards: through the torture of prisoners and detainees at U.S.-run facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan; the holding of hundreds of persons in legal limbo at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba; the rendition of foreign detainees ... to foreign countries known to practice torture; the establishment of a network of covert U.S.-run prisons overseas; eavesdropping without court warrants within the United States; and the astonishing resistance by the White House last year [2005] to a legislative ban on cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of any person in U.S. custody anywhere. Taken together, these actions have inflicted incalculable harm to the United States’ image in the world ... the damage has made it all too easy for foreign autocrats to resist U.S. democracy promotion by providing them with an easy riposte: “How can a country that tortures people abroad and abuses rights at home tell other countries how to

behave?".

The effects of such behaviour raise suspicion about US motives, which combined with the MENA region's colonial legacy, have had a significant impact on the Freedom Agenda; leading many indigenous groups to distance themselves from Washington and from the democracy assistance offered (Dalacoura 2005: 969; Kubba 2008).

### **The Freedom Agenda Consensus and Necessity**

In spite of the Freedom Agenda's critics there is still considerable support within the US for promoting democracy in the MENA. For many commentators the notion that the US should democratise the MENA, coercively if necessary, has been attributed to the neoconservative movement. Since September 11, 2001, it has been widely asserted that a 'neoconservative revolution' or 'neoconservative coup' took place within the Bush administration (Lind 2003: 10; Hudson 2005: 298-301). Accordingly, President Bush was described as the 'callow instrument of the neoconservative ideologues' (Epstein 2003: 13). For some, this "coup" was simply self-evident, leading to claims such as,

Unless you lived at the bottom of a well, you've probably noticed that 9/11 and Iraq have had a transforming effect on the American Right. The short formulation is that so-called neoconservatism has triumphed (Rauch 2003: 1607).

This is an assessment shared by both critics and advocates of neoconservatism. Richard Perle has argued that the Bush administration followed a neoconservative agenda on 'issue after issue', whilst William Kristol argued that President Bush's foreign policy was 'basically a neocon foreign policy' (in Hurst 2005: 75-6; also see Fukuyama 2006a). Moreover, by accepting the premise that the Bush foreign policy was equivocal to neoconservatism, some academics have even resorted to critiquing the Bush era vis-à-vis critiquing the neoconservative ideology (see Reus-Smit 2004; Hudson 2005).

That many neoconservatives have advocated democracy promotion in the MENA is

unquestionable. Equally, that many neoconservatives advocated the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq is unquestionable. Assertions of these positions are readily available within past editions of the neoconservative magazine *The Weekly Standard* and past papers produced by the *American Enterprise Institute*. Relatedly, upon hearing President Bush's second inaugural address, which placed democracy promotion centre stage, Robert Kagan asserted that, 'This is real neoconservatism ... It would be hard to express it more clearly' (in Mcmanus 2005). Moreover, throughout the 1990s, many neoconservatives openly disagreed with the Clinton administration's policy toward Iraq and the MENA more broadly. Paul Wolfowitz has long opposed American policy in the region adopted after the 1991 Gulf war, claiming that, 'containment is not a static policy: the political dynamics of the Middle East will tend to weaken sanctions over time' (Wolfowitz 1997: 111). By December 1997, this culminated in the conclusion,

Overthrow Him ... Military force is not enough ... it must be part of an overall political strategy that sets as its goal not merely the containment of Saddam but the liberation of Iraq from his tyranny (Khalilzad and Wolfowitz 1997: 14).

Similarly, the desire to overthrow Saddam Hussein was recorded as a wider neoconservative commitment in 1998, under the auspice of *The Project for a New American Century* letter to President Clinton, which argued that it was a "necessity" to deal with Iraq<sup>32</sup> (PNAC 1998; see Plesch 2005; Mann 2004).

Simply put, the reason for many neoconservatives to advocate democracy promotion as a strategy towards the MENA is ideological. It derives from the belief that the internal

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<sup>32</sup> Notably the signatories of this letter included: Elliott Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, Jeffrey Bergner, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, William Schneider, Jr., Vin Weber, Paul Wolfowitz, R. James Woolsey and Robert B. Zoellick. Many of these individuals later became key members of the Bush administration, but not all are neo-conservatives.



constitution of a state, and the nature of a regime, matters in international affairs.

Consequently,

there is an imperative to liberate people from tyranny and promote democracy around the world by reaching inside states and shaping their basic institutions. This stands in sharp contrast to realist foreign policy, which tends to respect sovereignty and be indifferent to the internal character of other states (Fukuyama 2007: 114).

This belief is supplemented by the notion that values such as “freedom, democracy and free enterprise” are not culturally specific. Accordingly, they are prescribed a “universal” appeal, in which all cultures desire them. As a logical corollary of this premise, these values can be applied to all cultures. Democracy constitutes the default condition all societies would adopt, if and only if tyrannical rule was removed (Reus-Smit 2004: 47; Fukuyama 2007: 114-54; Mead 2005: 117). These premises were certainly embedded within the Bush administration’s discourse. However, the notion that the Freedom Agenda was the result of a “neoconservative coup” is deeply problematic; both theoretically and empirically.

On a theoretical level, the “neoconservative coup” thesis is problematic because it asserts an overtly intentionalist argument. This is done by removing agents from wider cultural and bureaucratic structures. As Tony Smith has argued:

If the neoconservatives did indeed pour a poison of unlimited expectations into the president’s ear, along with those of Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, these men were more than ready to heed the tempters’ message ... The neoconservative appeal could not have been as great as it was without finding resonance in older and varied sources of American culture and belief (2007: 43-4).

Furthermore, as David Hastings Dunn has argued,

To assume that the President, or even his cabinet, could launch America on a military campaign [Iraq] of this scale without having the backing of Congress and the Washington political class more broadly, shows a poor understanding of American politics (2003: 281).

The “neoconservative coup” thesis writes out responsibility, and indeed culpability, attributable to a wider group of political actors. This is the case for the Iraq war and the Freedom Agenda more broadly. Accordingly, it is essential to note that there was a broad bipartisan consensus in Washington to invade Iraq in 2003, which was demonstrated by the overwhelming congressional approval for the war<sup>33</sup>. As commentators pointed out at the time,

Not since Congress passed the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which helped Lyndon B. Johnson to rapidly expand the Vietnam War, has a President won such broad authority to prosecute an undefined military operation and possible war (Reid 2002: 20).

Similarly, calls for promoting democracy in the Middle East have come from actors that are not affiliated with the neoconservative movement. As Gregory F. Gause III has illustrated,

Bush's belief in the link between terrorism and a lack of democracy is not limited to his administration. During the 2004 presidential campaign, Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) emphasised the need for greater political reform in the Middle East as an integral part of the war on terrorism. Martin Indyk, a senior Middle East policymaker in the Clinton administration, has written that it was a mistake for Clinton to focus on Arab-Israeli peace while downplaying Middle East democracy, and he has urged Washington to concentrate on political reform ... Morton Halperin, the director of policy planning in Clinton's State Department, argues that the roots of al Qaeda lie in the poverty and educational deficiencies of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, and that these deficiencies were caused by the authoritarian nature of those states and can be combated only through democratisation. The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman has done more to sell this logic to the public than anyone else (2005: 62-3).

The notion that America must spread democracy in the Middle East to combat terrorism has come from a wider political spectrum. Many voices have been added to this debate. There are individuals associated with neoconservatism such as Charles Krauthammer who proposed a doctrine of ‘democratic realism’. He has argued that ‘there’s nothing neo about Bush, and there’s nothing neo about Blair’, and regarding democracy promotion in the MENA claims that,

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<sup>33</sup> This was evident in the Republican-led House, which voted 296-133, and the Democrat-led Senate voting 72-23 (Reid 2002: 20).

There is not a single, remotely plausible, alternative strategy for attacking the monster behind 9/11. It's not Osama bin Laden; it's the cauldron of political oppression, religious intolerance, and social ruin in the Arab-Islamic world--oppression transmuted and deflected by regimes with no legitimacy into virulent, murderous anti-Americanism. It's not one man; it is a condition ... This is war, and in war arresting murderers is nice. But you win by taking territory—and leaving something behind (Krauthammer 2004a; Krauthammer 2004b).

However, the need to promote democracy in the MENA has also come from neoliberal “hawks” and political “moderates”. This is evident in Madeline Albright's (2003) claim that,

Although I was proud of the Clinton administration's foreign policy, and I understand that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, I regret not having done more to push for liberalisation in the Arab world.

Further still, individuals such as Kenneth Pollack, former director of Persian Gulf affairs at the NSC (2006) have argued that,

The end state that America's grand strategy toward the Middle East must envision is a new liberal order to replace a status quo marked by political repression, economic stagnation, and cultural conflict ... America must move aggressively and creatively to help reformers throughout the Arab world.

Similarly, Larry Diamond and Michael McFaul have written for a think tank affiliated with the Democratic Party, *The Progressive Policy Institute*, claiming that,

In this new embrace of democratic reform in the Middle East, Bush has been correct in intent, even if late to the cause ... Over time, expanding political freedom and accountability through democratising reforms would help to change the political and socio-economic conditions that have spawned terrorist groups and ideologies in the region (2006: 49-50).

This line of argument strongly resembles that put forward by a *Council on Foreign Relations* task force; directed by Steven A. Cook, and co-chaired by Madeline Albright and Vin Weber. One of the central conclusions of this report was that,

The United States should support democracy consistently and in all regions of the world. Although democracy entails certain risks, the denial of freedom carries much more significant long-term dangers. If Arab citizens are able to express grievances freely and peacefully, they will be less likely to turn to more extreme measures. They will also be more likely to build open and prosperous societies with respect for human rights and the rule of law (2005: 3-4).

Further still, in the most sustained analysis of the Freedom Agenda to date, *Freedom's Unsteady March*, Tamara Cofman Wittes argues that promoting democracy in the Middle East is 'neither a luxury nor a pipe dream. It is a necessity' (2008b: 146). Wittes draws attention to current instability in the MENA region caused by demographic change, economic stagnation and increasing alienation, which are challenging the 'Rents, Rhetoric and Repression' strategy that sustains autocratic regimes (2008b: 30-55).

The emergence of a consensus between "neoconservatives", "neoliberal" hawks and parts of America's "moderate" political commentariat, have been widely discussed (see Smith 2007; Kaye et al. 2008). For Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman (2006) the emergence of this consensus represents the formation of a "Democratist ideology" or "Democratism". Undoubtedly, there are risks in conflating proponents of democracy promotion into a single united ideology. Whilst such an approach can be used as a heuristic tool, it runs the risk of obscuring significant disagreements between actors. However, to the extent that there has been disagreement between proponents of democracy promotion it has largely concerned questions of "means". The most serious example of this concern is the use of military force, which, in light of the Iraq war, has increasingly been condemned; either entirely as a method of promoting democracy, or through claims that the Bush administration's approach was an 'unsound application' of a 'sound doctrine' (see Traub 2008; Lynch and Singh 2008; Carothers 2007b; Diamond 2005; Fukuyama 2005; Asmus and Pollack 2003). This represents a tension between those that advocate a vindictionalist strategy, and those that favour exemplarism. The distinction between the two positions is that those advocating the former, view 'America as [a] crusader', whilst those advocating the latter see 'America as [a] beacon' (Kissinger 1994: 18).

A similar tension exists concerning the most fruitful methods of providing democratic

assistance to bring about democratic change. In which many exponents of promoting democracy have debated the virtues of promoting economic growth, institutional reform and directly targeting civil society. This is unsurprising given that there is no consensus in the democratisation literature over how best to promote democracy through foreign assistance. Consequently this debate has been particularly pronounced over the question of ‘sequencing’ and issues concerning how to reshape America’s democracy bureaucracy to better coordinate and deliver assistance (see Carothers 2007a). Accordingly, much of the academic and policy debate about the Freedom Agenda has persistently concerned issues of tempo, between exponents that view democracy promotion as best delivered gradually through “top-down” liberalisation of current regimes, and those that see a more urgent imperative in challenging current authoritarian regimes (Fukuyama and McFaul 2007; Wittes 2008b; Gerecht 2005).

### **A Gap in the Literature**

As this literature review has shown, there is considerable debate about the Freedom Agenda. This has been based around strategic questions, reviewing issues of whether the United States “should” promote democracy in the MENA given other long term interests, and issues of whether the US “can” promote democracy given problems such as the “Islamist dilemma”. In spite of those that adopt a more “realist” approach to the question of democracy promotion, there are those that argue democracy promotion “must” be a significant part of the US approach to the MENA. Moreover, there is a significant coalescence of opinion between neoconservatives, neoliberals and moderate opinion, which has manifested itself in a bipartisan consensus towards promoting democracy in the MENA. This consensus is held together by a strategic vision in spite of disagreement over the exact means of promoting democracy. As a result questions of “how” to promote democracy are still heavily contested.

Despite this extensive body of literature however, there remains a significantly under addressed question; what did President Bush and members of his administration mean when they referred to “democracy” and “freedom”? Or put differently, what exactly was it that the Bush administration believed the Freedom Agenda was supposed to be promoting? These are particularly pertinent questions given that both “democracy” and “freedom” are essentially contested terms (see Whitehead 2003). Both terms are descriptive labels as well as values, which are highly contested between and within specific cultures. Moreover, such concepts are temporally specific; the “democracy” of Ancient Greece is not the same as the “democracy” of modern day America. Similarly, what the Founding Fathers meant by the term “freedom” is not the same as how the term “freedom” is deployed in modern day America. Carl Becker summed up this problem when he referred to “freedom” as a “magic but elusive word” (in Foner 1998: xiv). The obvious implication of this is that deploying essentially contested concepts is not a neutral act. Through deploying such terms dialogue emerges with other competing meanings.

The current omission within the literature is significant. It demonstrates a failure to address first order questions whilst simultaneously obfuscating a greater understanding of the Freedom Agenda. It excludes an explicitly hermeneutic dimension, and instead proceeds straight to critiques of praxis. On a superficial level, the literature has partially addressed questions of how and why the Freedom Agenda developed. For many it is simply a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which led the Bush administration to move from a “realist” to “idealist” foreign policy (see Mazarr 2003). Yet, to posit this binary fails to explore the space between them, and evaluate the importance of the “crisis” itself. In turn, such a failure stymies an understanding of how

the Freedom Agenda was constituted, and questions of why it was done in this way. Simply put, this has prevented deeper lessons about the Freedom Agenda being learnt at a philosophical level, through to the level of policy praxis.

To fill this gap in the literature it is necessary to return to first order questions and explicitly add a hermeneutic dimension. It is only by doing this that it is possible to reactivate the sedimentary logics that underpinned the Freedom Agenda<sup>34</sup>. This Husserlian aim is of critical importance given the role of “ideology” within the Bush administration. Indeed President Bush advocated a ‘foreign policy based on liberty’ and a ‘hopeful ideology called freedom’ to defeat extremists and their ‘hateful ideology’ (Bush 2006\_07\_28). That the President described his strategy as “ideological” raises questions about the assumptions upon which this ideology rested and how these affected the Freedom Agenda.

To add this hermeneutic dimension and create a greater understanding of the Freedom Agenda, it is necessary to elucidate a methodology. Such a methodology must be capable of theoretically and historically (re)-constructing the context from which the Freedom Agenda developed and therefore be sensitive to institutional changes. Moreover, it must include the ability to analyse both the underpinning philosophy of the Freedom Agenda and the manner in which this was turned into praxis. This will not only address the current gap in the literature, and therefore add value to this research area, but the methodology itself will be a contribution to knowledge in the area of Foreign Policy Analysis. It is to this task that section two of this research will now turn.

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<sup>34</sup> Here ‘sedimentation’ refers to the concealment of an original act of institutionalisation, and ‘reactivation’ is to make such acts visible again (see Laclau and Mouffe 2001: viii).

## **Section Two:**

# **Constructivist Institutionalism and Narrative Discourse Analysis**

*Constructivism is a theoretical stance whose name points up its central and distinctive claim. Social relations make people social beings; people as social beings make up a whole world, and not just a world of meaning, out of their social relation ... The most obvious implication is that scholars (people, relations) always begin in the middle. Context is unavoidable. So are beginnings. I begin with the process whereby we (as people, scholars) make the world and the world makes us.*

**Nicholas Onuf (1997: 7)**



#### **4. Constructing a Methodology and Establishing a Worldview**

To explicate the methodology used in this research, it is necessary to outline the principles and theories which guide the choice of method. Accordingly, it is necessary to establish an ordering–framework, and elucidate the conceptualisations and prescriptions that underpin a particular way of thinking about the world. Yet, the purpose of establishing such a worldview is to answer a set of research questions that emanate from a concern with, and a desire to understand, the current state of US-MENA relations and the Freedom Agenda in particular. Chiefly, the aim of the methodology is to underpin an answer to developmental and mechanical puzzles, which are at the core of this research<sup>35</sup>. These puzzles can be parsimoniously summarised as:

- How and why did the Freedom Agenda develop?
- How was the Freedom Agenda constituted and why was it done in this way?

Positing such questions however comes with a note of caution, as they do not emerge from ‘nowhere’. Rather, they are already embedded within a framework of ontological and epistemological assumptions and prescriptions<sup>36</sup>. These assumptions direct the espoused perspective of the world. As such, in the often quoted terms of Robert Cox, ‘theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose’ (1981: 128), and the theories embedded in the methodology that follows are no different. With this in mind, it is proposed that in the following section it would be prudent to explicitly set out the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this research’s methodology.

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<sup>35</sup> Although it is worth adding that the methodology clearly represents the manner in which I look at the world, and as such has already informed the nature of the puzzle I have sought to research. These two aspects, world-view and puzzle are not separate.

<sup>36</sup> This is done by suggesting distinctive types of analysis over others. In this case, that of understanding over explaining.

The most accurate term to label the methodology pursued in this research is ‘constructivist institutionalism’. Yet, using this term is highly problematic and without explication does little to inform or orientate the reader. This problem is exacerbated by the multitude of constructivist positions which can be taken. Many authors have documented the voluminous plethora of positions that fall under the constructivist umbrella, and added many adjectives as a result. For John Gerard Ruggie there is ‘neoclassical’, ‘postmodernist’ and ‘naturalistic’ (1998a: 35-6). For Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner there is ‘conventional’, ‘critical’ and ‘postmodern’ (1998: 675-8). For Christian Reus-Smit (2005) constructivism has evolved into ‘systemic’, ‘unit-level’ and ‘holistic’ variants. Moreover, Emanuel Adler (1997: 335-6) originally settled on cleavages between ‘modernist’, ‘rule-based’, ‘narrative knowing’ and ‘postmodernist’, but then altered the boundaries to ‘modernist’, ‘modernist linguistic’, ‘Critical’ and ‘Radical’ (2005: 95-8). Still some authors simply choose to distinguish between the constructivism espoused by various scholars, thus distinguishing ‘Wendt-ian’, ‘Kratowich-ian’ and ‘Onuf-ian’ constructivism (Zehfuss 2002). The list of possible adjectives that could be applied to constructivist approaches does appear to be dizzyingly endless along a spectrum of ‘thick’ to ‘thin’.

As a consequence of this, adding ‘institutionalism’ to a constructivist framework would appear to be just another adjective, added to the plethora that is “constructivism”. Yet, the term does serve a function. Firstly, the term ‘constructivist institutionalism’<sup>37</sup> has arisen from ‘new institutionalist’ literature in comparative political analysis. As such, the term implies a distinctive analytical position for those that are familiar with this literature. Significantly, it should be recognised that constructivist institutionalism has affinities

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<sup>37</sup> This has also been termed discursive, ideational, and economic constructivism (see Schmidt 2006: 109; Hay 2006a: 56; Campbell and Pedersen 2001: 193-275).

with constructivism in IR, but the two ‘are perhaps best seen as parallel if initially distinct developments’ (Hay 2006a: 64). However, whilst their origins are distinct, the methodology outlined below will seek to synthesise constructivist institutionalism with ‘rule-based/ modernist linguistic’ constructivism. The intention of this synthesis is to stress the centrality of complex institutional change and the specific ontology that this implies, whilst providing an account of social reality in which social facts are constituted by language and rules. The aim of this is to allow an empirical, historical and interpretive account of the Freedom Agenda to emerge.

The desire to assert such a methodology arises from dissatisfaction with other forms of constructivism, which have serious limits in their ability to answer the research questions. It is recognised that IR ‘constructivism’ contains epistemologically opposed and therefore incommensurable positions. Consequently:

[E]ven to talk of “a” social constructivism is problematic: there are many, and this poses the question of just how useful it is to use this blanket term, as is commonly done when talking of a “constructivist turn” in IR theory (Smith 2001: 40).

Thus, what is needed for this research, and what constructivist institutionalism supplies, is a specific form of constructivism that is both compatible with Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and sensitive to issues of social and political change. It is through these virtues that it can help add value to the current literature on US-MENA relations and the evolution of the Freedom Agenda.

### **Dissatisfaction with “Constructivism”: Towards a Solution**

Before explicating the premises of constructivist institutionalism it is necessary to justify and explain the dissatisfaction that calls for its adoption. Thus, it is essential to briefly survey constructivism in IR. However, given the wide ranging set of distinctions and the many texts classified under this methodological title this is an intimidating task. As a

result, this section has two specific aims, firstly, to identify the core of constructivist approaches, and secondly, to identify why “mainstream constructivism” is not compatible with the aims of this research. This will not only justify the adoption of constructivist institutionalism but also help elucidate the position in the latter sections of this methodological section.

The various divisions in the constructivist school of thought, highlighted above, demonstrate an important vivacity with regards to various analytical controversies at the ontological, epistemological and methodological levels. Instructively, these problems force analytical choices and give rise to various analytical perspectives. As such, it would appear that it is more accurate to talk of constructiv-‘isms’, as various scholars navigate and (re)construct alternative routes through the Political Analysis/International Relations landscape. In this sense, constructivism can be seen as a theoretical association which, like Elgar’s *Enigma*, is bound by *Variations on an Original Theme*.

Accordingly, what binds even incommensurable constructiv-‘isms’ is an appeal to a meta-theoretical position from which to study social phenomena (Adler 1997; Dunne 1995; Hopf 1998; Ruggie 1998a). As such ‘constructivism is not a theory, but rather an analytical framework’ (Reus-Smit 2005: 202). It is perhaps best to regard constructivist approaches as being espoused from a similar worldview rather than antagonistic solo pieces. This is apparent in the birth of the constructivist paradigm, which was an explicit reaction to the dominance of Rationalist approaches in the study of International Relations. Most notably in light of the Cold War and the dismal ability of Rationalist approaches to predict change, constructivism has become a highly attractive approach in IR (Checkel 1998). Constructivists reject appeals to parsimonious general theories of international politics. Put simply, such theories are unviable because of the constitutive

role of ideas, agency, norms, identity, rules, and culture<sup>38</sup>. These factors are seen to lesser or greater degrees as inherently historical and socially contingent and therefore central to analysis. This highlights the need for analytical sensitivity when dealing with issues of structure and agency, which is the most fiercely contested debate within the constructivist paradigm (see Gould 1998; Adler 2005: 104-6). Moreover, it is a disagreement over the nature of structure and agency that creates the largest cleavages within constructivist literature.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that this research must engage with the structure and agency debate. Moreover, as a basic premise, this research adopts an appreciation for Steve Smith's assertion that,

a priori, social constructivism should be particularly relevant to foreign policy analysis (FPA), precisely because social construction starts from the assumptions that actors make their worlds, and this assumption lies behind most of the foreign policy analysis literature (Smith 2001: 38).

Accepting this premise has consequences for the type of constructivist methodology that can be adopted by this research. Not all forms of constructivism accept this premise as an axiom carried through their research. As such this premise provides the basis for rejecting 'mainstream' constructivism, and the need to assert constructivist institutionalism to provide a conception of *social change* and *social action*<sup>39</sup> more in tune with Smith's assertion. This of course begs the question what exactly is understood as mainstream constructivism and why is it being rejected?

The acme of mainstream constructivism is most closely associated with the work of

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<sup>38</sup> These factors are stressed to different degrees by various authors, which help construct alternative analytical frameworks within constructive-isms.

<sup>39</sup> Note that although this study is explicitly concerned with 'US foreign and security policy', the term *social* is being used. This is an important term as it stresses the extent to which in the post-Cold War world International Relations theory has come to acknowledge and problematise the implicit social theories that underpin the discipline. Notably this is most clearly the case in Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics*. (For further discussion on this point see Hay 2002).

Alexander Wendt. Not only did Wendt (1987) first instigate discussion of *The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations*, but the publication of *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) has produced the most comprehensive account of constructivist thinking to international politics. This is highly significant because it is Wendt, and the ‘mainstream’ constructivism that he espouses, that constitutes the most influential social constructivist position in IR theory (see Guzzini and Leander 2006: xvii-xix). Notably, this accolade is a result of Wendt’s desire to construct a ‘middle way’ or *via media* between rationalist and reflectivist approaches to IR (Wendt 1992, 1999; Smith 2000a, 2001; Zehfuss 2002: 38-93). The structural idealism his position espouses focuses on social constructs at the systems-level, which Wendt argues can fill the explanatory void evident in neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Ideas, Wendt contends, construct preferences and interests, and are therefore important in understanding systemic change. Moreover, it is ideas through constructed identities that allow materially similar states to act divergently within the international system (Wendt 1999; see Hudson 2007: 10-14).

This would suggest that Wendt’s constructivism would be an excellent place from which to start an analysis of the role of both structure and agency in US foreign policy decision making; this however is not the case. Most discernibly, this is because Wendt’s constructivism is a systems-level account of IR. The state is simply a ‘black box’, which is a unitary and rational actor in the state system. State identities and interests are determined exogenously by the relational position in the international political system. This drives foreign policy. There is no room for domestic factors; domestic actors and domestic processes are deemed plainly irrelevant to the study of International Relations. Those wishing to challenge this conception of the state and the conclusions it leads to are simply mistaken and should ‘leave well enough alone’ (Wendt 1999: 196). For Wendt,

‘states are people too’ and ‘we can legitimately attribute anthropomorphic qualities like desires, beliefs, and intentionality’ (Wendt 1999: 215; 197). This assertion highlights a fundamental paradox at the heart of Wendt’s mainstream constructivism<sup>40</sup>, and generates a systematic failure of such a methodology when applied to FPA. To elucidate, Wendt argues that he gives ‘equal weight to agency and structure’. The logic behind this comes from the ontological assumption that ‘[t]hey are *mutually* constitutive and codetermined’ (emphasis in original, Wendt 1999: 184). Yet, by focusing on the state level he writes out human agency, problematically shifting agency beyond human control to the systemic-level. An inconsistency is created. Agency is discussed but conflated with a collective social form. Consequently, in this schema, there is little conceptualisation of human agency at all (see Wight 1999: 125-29; Smith 2000a: 161-62; Sarvary 2006)<sup>41</sup>. Wendt’s appeal to a positivist/scientific realism leads social constructivism to be an ‘adjunct explanation for those things that the positivist mainstream finds difficult to explain’ (Smith 2001: 39).

To anthropomorphise the state is highly problematic to this research project, as it writes out the possibility of this being a legitimate study. As Steve Smith argues, ‘Wendt’s position seems to make foreign policy analysis redundant or even impossible’ (Smith 2001: 50). The very adoption of the Wendt-ian form of constructivism excludes questions concerning the development and impact of the normative and ideational foundations of the Freedom Agenda being asked. It lies in stark contrast to the desire in FPA to treat the state as an actor but also open up the black box and look inside. Wendt’s theory operates at a different level to Foreign Policy Analysis and subsequently does not allow for sufficient agency in the construction of US foreign policy.

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<sup>40</sup> This ‘mainstream’ approach can take various forms such as ‘soft’, ‘moderate’, ‘structure/norm-orientated’, ‘neo-classical’ or ‘modernist’ (Kubalkova 2001: 32-4; See Adler 2005: 97-8; Ruggie 1998a: 35).

<sup>41</sup> For a vigorous critique of Wendt’s position see Colin Wight (1999: 125-29) and Steve Smith (2000a).

It is in the critique of this anthropomorphic reification that it is possible to construct constructivist institutionalism and navigate this approach in synergy with Foreign Policy Analysis. The starting point of this critique is simply to reject Wendt's parsimonious premise; via the ontological contention that a state is incapable of having an idea<sup>42</sup>. As Valerie Hudson argues,

Only human beings have ideas ... create identities ... change identities ... [and] act on the basis of identity ... Only humans are agents in international relations ... When you drop those humans out, you are left with a machine (2007: 10-11).

The significance of such an assertion is that it undermines Wendt's form of constructivism by placing the construction of social reality with human actors that make their world. This in turn makes it possible to genuinely align constructivism with Karl Marx's assertion that 'men [sic] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves' (2002 [1852]: 329). As such human actors are now centre stage *within* social structures; and what social structure can be more important to foreign policy than that of the state, albeit now defined as a corporate bureaucracy and not an individual actor.

### **Constructivist Institutionalism and Foreign Policy Analysis**

The impact of moving down a level from Wendt's systemic theory is that it allows an alternative constructivist conception of the state and how foreign policy is made to be asserted. Contra Wendt, the state can be conceived not as an agent but as a structure created by agents (see Wight 1999: 136; Hollis and Smith 1991). This is of crucial importance because once understood as a structure, and therefore as a constituted contingent entity, a micro-level understanding of human agency can be (re)introduced.

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<sup>42</sup> It is illuminating to recall that Wendt's appeal to a 'state-as-actor' logic was originally based on convention, as this is the 'accepted practice of mainstream international relations discourse' (Wendt 1992: 397). It is an odd form of constructivism that does not acknowledge the constructed nature of this discourse and reflect upon it!



This stresses the interconnected and mutually constitutive nature of both the ‘domestic’ and the ‘foreign’. As Christopher Hill asserts, ‘foreign policy can never be abstracted from the domestic context out of which it springs. Without domestic society and the state there would be no foreign policy’ (2003: 37). This clearly concurs with Bob Jessop’s assertion that ‘it is not the state which acts: it is always specific sets of politicians and state officials located in specific parts of the state system’<sup>43</sup> (Jessop 1990: 367). One could easily add that they are also the agents that do the constructing so central to constructivism; to miss this point is to miss the added value that constructivism can bring to FPA<sup>44</sup>.

Significantly, by defining the methodology in this research as *constructivist institutionalism*, it is implied that a conception of the state is fundamental to this research. The aim is to signal an affiliation with ‘new institutionalist’ literature that has increasingly sought to ‘bring the state back into’ political analysis<sup>45</sup> (Schmidt 2006: 98). A further implication of this is to reject intentionalist approaches to the study of foreign policy and the domination of behaviouralism in FPA<sup>46</sup> (see Hudson and Vore 1995: 215-22; Kubalkova 2001). Such input-orientated theories lack an adequate conception of structure and fail to recognise that politics, ergo foreign policy, takes place within institutional settings. However, it should be noted that not all ‘institutionalisms’ are the

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<sup>43</sup> This could read as methodological individualism. This is not the intention. To argue that the micro-level is ontologically primary, is not the same as saying the macro-level is ontologically non-existent or constitutive in some way. What is being questioned is the status - actions and conditions must be accounted for. Levels exist in relation to one another through collective intentionality.

<sup>44</sup> This is of paramount importance because for any constructivist position to espouse the mutually constitutive nature of agency and structure the internal micro-level must be ontologically primary. Indeed John Searle asserts that ‘It is only from the internal point of view of the participants that the institution can exist at all’ and therefore concludes that the ‘internal micro-level is ontologically primary’ (Searle 1995: 98).

<sup>45</sup> Moreover the term ‘Constructivist Institutionalism’ signals a connection to literature in European Union Studies, State Theory and Political Economy.

<sup>46</sup> This begs the question, why have I been so keen to assert that this study is in the academic discipline of foreign policy analysis? The answer is in Hermann and Kegley’s description that what sets FPA apart from the more mainstream IR is an insistence that foreign policy explanation cannot treat the decider exogenously (Hermann and Kegley 1995: 514).

same. Much like constructivist literature in IR, a varied and incommensurable set of positions are espoused ranging from Rational Choice institutionalism to Discursive institutionalism<sup>47</sup> (see Schmidt 2006). Apparent in each is not only a different conception of what an institution is, but as a logical consequence the nature of the state and how to study it. Constructivist institutionalism arises from an engagement with this literature and a desire to overcome its limitations. Thus, as Colin Hay argues:

Constructivist institutionalists were motivated by the desire to capture, describe, and interrogate institutional disequilibrium. As such, rational choice and normative/sociological institutionalism, which rely albeit for rather different reasons on the assumption of equilibrium, were theoretical non-starters ... most routes to constructivist institutionalism can trace their origins to historical institutionalism. Yet, if historical institutionalism has typically served as an initial source of inspiration for constructivist institutionalists, it has increasingly become a source of frustration and a point of departure (2006a: 57-60).

The underlying logic of historical institutionalism is that of presumed equilibrium exemplified by the term 'path-dependent'. Fundamentally, this draws to different extents on calculus and cultural logics both of which either presume equilibrium or are equilibrating (Hay 2006a: 61; also see Hall and Taylor 1996). Such schemes could only take this research so far in answering its central developmental puzzle. If carried forward they would desensitise the study to post-formative institutional change after September 11, 2001. Moreover, without a well-built conception of change it is particularly difficult, if not impossible, to develop an understanding of the Freedom Agenda, its formation and subsequent changes. Thus:

Accounts which see *actors as driven* either by utility maximisation in an institutionalised game scenario (rational choice institutionalism) or by institutionalised norms and cultural conventions (normative/sociological institutionalism<sup>48</sup>), or indeed both (historical institutionalism), are unlikely to have much purchase on questions of post-formative institutional change (emphasis added Hay 2006a: 61).

Accordingly, the notion of actors being 'driven' is highly problematic, not only in

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<sup>47</sup> For an excellent overview of new institutionalist scholarship see Peters (2005), Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth (1992) and Campbell and Pedersen (2001).

<sup>48</sup> One could add modernist forms of constructivism that use terms like identity and norms as 'drivers' of behaviour.

relation to understanding social change, but more fundamentally to a notion of agency. If agency is to be understood as a concept which expresses the free will that actors exercise in social action, then to the extent that actors are ‘driven’, this is reduced. The greater the reduction; the greater the structuralist tendency. This undermines considerations of agency at a methodological level and fails to identify that individual agents create and remain at the centre of these very “drivers”. Actors are ascribed a determined behaviour by context itself, parsimoniously characterised as reproducing a rational mode of action. Such an approach is empirically problematic when taken to its logical conclusion of an inbuilt logic fated to be reproduced irrespective of which agents hold power over the American foreign policy-making apparatus. Without addressing issues of interpretation and strategic action, agents become characterised as cultural dupes destined to perform rigid acts of social (re)construction without any reflexivity or possibility of societal change.

It is noteworthy that this was not the original intention of Historical Institutionalism. In the text that gave rise to the name Historical Institutionalism the aims of this approach were explicitly stated. Thus, as Thelen and Steinmo declared:

Working at the level of midrange theory, institutionalists have constructed important analytical bridges: between state-centred and society-centred analyses ... institutional analysis also allows us to examine the relationship between political actors as objects and *as agents of history*. Institutions...can shape and constrain political strategies in important ways *but they are themselves also the outcome* (conscious or unintended) *of deliberate political strategies, of political conflict, and of choice* (emphasis added 1992: 10).

If this were the case in historical institutionalist literature then the contrast with constructivist institutionalism would be merely one of analytical emphasis. However, Historical Institutionalism has ‘increasingly been “hollowed-out” by building bridges to Rational Choice Institutionalism’ (Hay 2006a: 63). As such it has lost the project’s intended ontological stance as it has developed.

As this would suggest, constructivist institutionalism takes its ontological starting point from that which has been lost in historical institutionalist literature. However, it has developed a distinct ontology of its own, by refusing to substitute actors in the name of analytical parsimony. This reflects a synergy between ‘constructivist institutionalism’ that arises from new institutionalist literature, and ‘modernist linguistic/rule orientated constructivism’ which has arisen in IR<sup>49</sup>. These two approaches have been developing in near isolation from one another and yet have striking parallels, because of their concern for subjective hermeneutics and an emphasis on the discursive construction of social reality. The former provides highly specific methodology, whilst the latter provides an explicit and firm philosophical underpinning from Martin Heidegger through to John Searle. As such they provide an excellent opportunity to cross-fertilise and inform this research. It is to this task that this research will now turn, starting with an explicit account of structure and agency.

### **Structure and Agency: The Strategic-Relational Approach**

The basic crux of the structure and agency debate revolves around how these two factors relate to one another (Adler 2005: 104). Notably, in IR literature, it is difficult to discover a position that refers to the structure and agency debate in such stark terms as to exclude the other entirely. It is therefore more useful to think of positions in IR as degrees between two extreme poles of structuralism and intentionalism. Thus, even Kenneth Waltz’s neo-realist position explicitly asserts that states are not and have never been the only actors, but that they are the *most important actors*. More recently, he has argued that:

Structures condition behaviours and outcomes, yet explanations of behaviours and

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<sup>49</sup> For an overview of this thought see the book series *International Relations in a Constructed World* edited by Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf and Ralph Pettman and published by M.E. Sharpe.

outcomes are indeterminate because both unit-level and structural causes are in play ... structures shape and shove. They do not determine behaviours ... the shaping and shoving of structures may be resisted ... with skill and determination structural constraints can sometimes be countered (Waltz 1986: 343).

This is a significant admission highlighting that even the most systemic theories cannot do without both structure and agency if they are to withstand critique<sup>50</sup> (see Hollis and Smith 1991: 92-118). Thus, the structure and agency ‘problem’, as it is often referred to, is not a problem at all. It does not need a ‘solution’ in the form of a definitive answer, and therefore research cannot be reduced to a stir-and-bake recipe of “one part agency to every three parts structure”. Framing the debate as a ‘problem’ simply treats an ontological issue as if it were an empirical riddle (Hay 2002: 90-3). An account is needed of how structure and agency interact, which resonates with human experience and provides a vernacular to be carried through this research; not an attempt to transcend the problem. Such an account can provide foundations upon which to understand social and political phenomena.

In constructivist institutionalist literature this has been attempted. Central to the position’s focus has been an attempt to understand complex institutional change, and it is through its account of structure and agency that this is made possible. As Colin Hay argues,

Actors are strategic, seeking to realise certain complex, contingent, and constantly changing goals. They do so in a context which favours certain strategies over others and must rely upon perceptions of that context which are at best incomplete and which may very often prove to have been inaccurate after the event<sup>51</sup> (2006a: 63).

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<sup>50</sup> Indeed as Stanley Rosen points out, the intelligibility of structure requires the ‘absence of structure’ (2003: x).

<sup>51</sup> This has a striking similarity to Onuf’s assertion that: When we, as human beings, act as agents, we have goals in mind, even if we are not fully aware of them when we act. If someone asks us to think about the matter, we can usually formulate these goals more or less in the order of their importance to whomever we are acting as agents for, starting with ourselves. Most of the time, agents have limited, inaccurate, or inconsistent information about the material and social conditions that effect the likelihood of reaching given goals. Nevertheless, agents do the best they can to achieve their goals with the means that nature and society (together—always together) make available to them (Onuf 1998: 60)

Whilst this may appear to be a deceptively obvious statement it is worth deconstructing and developing further. Notably the ‘actor’ is seen as an analytically distinct entity that engages with and within social structures. As a result, it is worth making a further analytical distinction between Dasein<sup>52</sup> and agency. The former is literally an entity ‘being-there’, and as a term is ‘purely an expression of its being’ (Heidegger 1967: 33). Dasein is “thrown” into the world and has agency when it engages with its social condition (see Gadamer 1994; 2004: 244-53). The term agency refers to such action and social conduct<sup>53</sup>; its etymological roots lie in the term *agentem*, meaning ‘to do’. This distinction implies *intentionality*<sup>54</sup> which is an intrinsic property of Dasein and provides the capacity to act consciously with free will and at least deliberate between choices and potential routes of action. However, Dasein, by definition is a ‘being-in-the-world’ and consequently is constrained/bound by the context that world provides. The importance of this is that the mind and the body become intricately linked to the world removing the ‘Cartesian anxiety’ and also make the distinction between structure and agency a purely analytical construction. Accordingly, structure and agency are in practice completely interwoven; a premise that provides a pragmatic starting point for analysis.

A similar dialectical position is adopted by Nicolas Onuf and the Miami International Relations Group. Central to this group’s thinking is that the distinction between agency and structure is an analytical one, as one implies the other. In such circumstances to

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<sup>52</sup> This term is being used because it is an accepted term in philosophy and therefore carries with it a conceptual baggage that I want to introduce. The term literally means ‘being-there’ referring to an inquiring entity (Heidegger 1967: 28-9) Heidegger: ‘The essence of Dasein lies in its existence. Accordingly those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity are not ‘properties’ present-at-hand of some entity which looks so and so and is itself more than that...so when we designate this entity with the term ‘Dasein’, we are expressing not its what (as if it were a table, house or tree) but its being’ (BT42).

<sup>53</sup> Relatedly Dasein has free will in the sense of its ability to choose how it will be and lives through its possibilities. It is always engaged with the world and the entities within it. This is a fundamental conception to transcending the Cartesian dualism upon which mind/body- agency/structure are separated.

<sup>54</sup> Note that this is intentionality-with-a-t, which is a property of the mind by which it is directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world independent of itself. This should not be confused with intentionality-with-an-s (see Searle 2004: 122-5).

remove either removes the ontological status of the other. Both are mutually constitutive.

Thus:

Fundamental to constructivism is the proposition that...social relations *make or construct* people – *ourselves* - into the kind of beings that we are. Conversely, *we make* the world what it is, from the raw materials that nature provides, by doing what we do with each other and saying what we say to each other...*people make society, and society makes people. This is a continuous, two-way process* (emphasis added Onuf 1998: 59).

To assert this ontological dualism<sup>55</sup> between structure and agency creates analytical problems. It implies a need for what Anthony Giddens calls a ‘third ontology’ beyond both structuralism and intentionalism (Giddens 1976, 1979, 1984). Indeed both constructivist institutionalism and rule-orientated constructivism owe a great deal to Giddens’ structuration theory. The similarities clearly lie in the rejection of ontological individualism and pure ontological structuralism. Yet both constructivist institutionalism and rule-orientated constructivism have departed from structuration theory in significant ways. Notably, the reason in both cases is that structuration theory fails to provide a mechanism capable of merging structure and agency at a methodological level. Both point to an irony in Giddens’ work in which he ‘appeals to an ontological duality (interlinking) of structure and agency, [whilst] he delivers an analytical dualism (separation)’ (Hay 2002: 120; also see Layder 1998: 100; Gould 1998: 79-81).

The attempt to transcend the structure-agency dualism is however done in different ways. The most established approach in constructivist institutionalism draws on Bob Jessop’s ‘strategic-relational approach’. The focus of which is ‘upon the dialectical interplay of structure and agency in real contexts of social and political interaction’ (Hay 2002: 127). As a result, the focus is shifted to focusing on the *strategic actor* and the *strategically selective context*; not on the inseparable ontological factors of structure and agency. Thus, the terms inscribe the dualism within them (see Jessop 2005; Hay 2002: 126-134).

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<sup>55</sup> Note: Not duality which implies separation much like the Morphogenetic approach.

By focusing on the strategic content of action, it is accepted that,

agents both internalise perceptions of their context and consciously orient themselves towards that context in choosing between potential courses of action ... Yet for that action to have any chance of realising such intentions, it must be informed by a strategic assessment of the relevant context in which strategy occurs and upon which it subsequently impinges (Hay 2002: 129).

The innovation behind this approach is that it provides a method of describing the dualism of structure-agency, but also recognises that Dasein orientates itself towards its environment and in doing so comes up against a strategically selective environment. In such a schema, certain strategies are more likely to be rewarded than others and whatever the context, outcomes are never determined structurally. As such an actor's preferences are never assumed to be fixed, nor to be determined by the material circumstances in which they find themselves (Hay 2002: 129-30). Therefore, different actors in similar material circumstances will construct their interests and preferences differently. Moreover, the same actor will review, revise and reform their perceived interests and preferences over time (Hay 2002: 130).

Once Dasein is recognised as possessing strategic ability, which is a capacity to devise and revise in order to realise its intentions, it is implied that Dasein engages with its environment by judgement. Dasein becomes an agent with agency, and that agent's knowledge of the world and strategic orientation towards that world is in a continuous process of pragmatic interpretation (see Sharpcott 1994: 71). As such the strategic relational approach provides,

[A] dynamic understanding of the relationship of structure and agency which resolutely refuses to privilege either moment (structure or agency) in this dialectical and relational interaction ... this provides a range of crucial insights into the analysis of political power and political change, whilst exhibiting a particular sensitivity to the role of ideas (ideational factors) in the understanding of political dynamics (Hay 2002: 134).



## **Ideas, Material and Interests**

Once Dasein is seen as strategic in its engagement with the world, ideas assume a critical relevance because it is ideas that provide the point of mediation between Dasein and its environment. The perceptions that Dasein holds are at best incomplete and may prove to be inaccurate after an event. As such Dasein is normatively orientated towards the *strategically selective context* (see Hay 2006a: 63). Thus:

Desires, preferences, and motivations are not a contextually given fact - a reflection of material or even social circumstances - but are irredeemably ideational, reflecting a normative (indeed moral, ethical, and political) orientation towards the context in which they will have to be realised (Hay 2006a: 63-4).

Such sentiments represent constructivist institutionalism's commitment to a 'turn to ideas'.

In opposition to rationalist theories, constructivist institutionalism takes interests as needing to be explained rather than to do the explaining with (Blyth 2003: 702). This directly challenges the distinction between interests and ideas. This lies in stark contradiction to the manner in which ideas are often treated in the analysis of foreign policy. For many scholars 'ideas' are frequently treated as objects that provide an explanatory variable that are persistently separated from interests (see Laffey and Weldes 1997). The seminal volume exemplifying this trend is Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane's (1993) *Ideas and Foreign Policy*. Whilst 'ideas' are introduced as a variable this is not intended to 'challenge the premise that people behave in self-interested and broadly rational ways' (1993: 5). As such 'variations of interests are not accounted for by variations in the character of the ideas that people have' (1993: 27). Within this scheme, consideration of where interests come from is avoided and ideas are reduced to post-hoc rationalisations that justify policies made on the grounds of already given material interests (see Laffey and Weldes 1997: 199-201).

For constructivist institutionalism, ideas are constitutive and define interests. Interests are seen as social constructions and therefore are not natural or independent of Dasein. Consequently, interests are produced, reproduced, and transformed through the discursive practices of strategically selective actors, and emerge out of the representations they construct of the strategically selective context they face (see Weldes 1998: 218). Thus, it is out of descriptions of the situation, and definitions of the problem (representations), that state officials make sense of the world around them and resultantly construct interests<sup>56</sup> (Weldes 1996: 280). The implications of this are clearly applicable to the concept of the ‘national interest’<sup>57</sup>. Thus,

national interests ... are social constructions that emerge out of a ubiquitous and unavoidable process of representation through which meaning is created. In representing for themselves and others the situation in which the state finds itself, state officials have already constructed the national interest<sup>58</sup> (Weldes 1996: 283).

This clearly demonstrates constructivism’s desire to return to first order questions and focus on interest formation, rather than a rationalist focus on interest satisfaction (Reus-Smit 2005: 203). Moreover, this all rests on the ontological nature of ideas and the distinctions made between modernist constructivism and constructivist institutionalism. Whilst the former, epitomised in *The Culture of National Security* (Katzenstein 1996), largely conceptualises norms and identities as constituted by culture and therefore as stagnant ideational structures; the latter rejects such naturalistic assumptions<sup>59</sup> in favour of espousing narrative explanatory protocols that account for the dynamic nature of ideas

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<sup>56</sup> Weldes notes that the concept of interest is itself a construction. The very notion that interests motivate action and therefore should be referred to in explanations of behaviour and social outcomes is itself a relatively new concept that came with the rise of liberalism and capitalism (Weldes 1996: 306).

<sup>57</sup> For alternative constructivist conceptions of the national interest see Wendt (1999), Finnemore (1996a), and Chafetz, Spirtas and Frankel eds. (1999). For an excellent overview of this literature see Burchill (2005).

<sup>58</sup> The Weldes version of constructing the national interest places a clear emphasis on agency in constructing the national interest. Finnemore however stresses normative structures.

<sup>59</sup> The reason I have termed these naturalist assumptions is because of the manner in which Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996: 65) refer to the methodologies espoused throughout the book as explanatory in their engagement with “normal science”, and thus posit ‘causal effects either of identities or of the cultural/institutional content of global or domestic environment’. For a more thorough critique see Ruggie (1998b: esp. 38), however it should be noted that because it is an edited book the extent to which naturalism is subscribed varies across authors.

(see Schmidt 2006: 112). This creates a ‘tipping-point’ between modernist constructivism, which has a close affinity with sociological institutionalism (see Finnemore 1996b; Berman 2001), and constructivist institutionalism that asserts the importance of how actors (re)conceptualise the world ‘as a resource to promote change’ (Schmidt 2006: 112). As such the dividing line rests on how ideas and ‘causation’ are related to behaviour; whether ideas are ‘*causes of action*’ or ‘*reasons for action*’ (see Ruggie 1998b: 22).

### **Ideas: Towards a Conception of Continuity and Change**

The turn to ideas is central in answering both the developmental and mechanical puzzles at the heart of this research. At the acme of the constructivist institutionalist position is a definition of institutions as ‘codified systems of ideas and the practices they sustain’<sup>60</sup> (Hay 2006a: 58). This is important because, if ideas provide the basis of institutional creation and perpetuation, then institutions are ‘observer-dependent’. As John R. Searle explains:

A feature is observer-dependent if its very existence depends on the attitudes, thoughts and intentionality of observers, users, creators, designers, buyers, sellers and conscious intentional agents generally. Otherwise it is observer (or intentionality) independent. Examples of observer-dependent features include money, property, marriage and language. Examples of observer-independent features of the world include force, mass, gravitational attraction, the chemical bond, and photosynthesis (2007: 82).

This distinction has a significant impact on the study of politics and political change, not least because most of political reality is observer-dependent. Accordingly ‘something is an election, a parliament, a president or a revolution only if people have certain attitudes toward the phenomena in question’ (Searle 2007: 83). Political phenomena therefore require ontological subjectivity, which once acknowledged opens a subjunctive “ontology

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<sup>60</sup> The emergence of this definition has largely arisen from the observed empirical regularity that ‘ideational change invariably precedes institutional change’ (Hay 2006a: 66).

of possibility”. Consequently, the notions of political continuity and change are inseparably linked representations of the world and how these help generate regulative and constitutive rules for strategic agents.

Although not broken down in this way, constructivist institutionalists have reached similar conclusions about the role of ideas and agency in relation to political continuity and change. Such a position is highly indebted to Peter Hall’s (1993) sustained, consistent and systematic attempt to accord a key role to ideas in institutional outcomes whilst synthesising it within a historical context. Notably, Hall draws an analogy between Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and the policy-making process. This allowed Hall to introduce the concept of paradigms into institutional analysis.

Kuhn argued that science develops in a succession of enduring paradigms which are punctuated by periods of ‘revolutions’. Within the revolutionary period the existing paradigm is challenged and replaced. Subsequently, it is possible to distinguish a phase of ‘normal science’ in which the paradigm is ascendant and uncontested. Within the ‘normal’ period the paradigm provides an interpretive framework for ‘routine puzzle-solving’, which demarcates the boundaries and methods of scientific competence. By contrast, however, with an increase and accumulation of ‘anomalies’ a challenge to the paradigm can emerge because of a loss of confidence, and thus create a period of ‘exceptional’ science. Within such a period, the anomalies cause some scientists to reject the former paradigm’s constraints in search of answers not provided by the old paradigm. This creates a period in which competing approaches emerge, until a consensus can be created and institutionalised. Thus, the space created by the failure of the old paradigm is replaced with a new paradigm which emerged in the ‘exceptional science’ period,

consequently establishing a new phase of normal science under the domination of a new paradigm (see Kuhn 1996; Hall 1993; Hay 2001: 196-7; Benton and Craib 2001: 58-63).

Hall extends this analogy to the policy-making arena, by arguing that policy is made within context of a 'policy paradigm'. Thus Hall asserts that,

policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing ... this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much is taken for granted and unnameable to scrutiny as a whole ... this interpretive framework [is] a policy paradigm (1993: 279).

A policy paradigm is internalised by politicians and policy experts, and acts as a source of guidance for conducting and evaluating policies, which defines the range of legitimate methods available. This in turn demarcates the very intentions and objectives of policy itself. This in short 'comes to circumscribe the realm of the politically feasible, practical and desirable' (Hay 2001: 197). Ideas are therefore not perceived as static objects but rather dynamic social products that can help maintain continuity and produce change. Such thinking has increasingly been incorporated into the study of foreign policy-making by authors such as Jeffrey Legro, who has argued that,

in addition to preferences and strategies, actors must also have ideas or beliefs, that is, some notion about which strategy ... is best suited to achieving the preferred outcome. For example to know that states prefer security above all other goals tells us little about what behaviour they believe will achieve it (Legro 2005: 24-5).

It is from this premise that an appeal to ideas is made that occurs in a similar pattern to that espoused by Hall's use of Kuhn's theory:

'Ideational Orthodoxy (Continuity)' → Shock (Collapse; Change) → Consolidation of New Orthodoxy (Continuity)<sup>61</sup> (see Legro 2005: 1-48).

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<sup>61</sup> This is somewhat cruder than that presented by Legro but serves the purpose intended. For a more detailed account of Legro's 'Two-Stage Model of Change' refer to his diagram (2005: 14).

As this diagram demonstrates there are three distinct ‘phases’ to this conception of continuity and change. Notable is the manner in which it deals with the *form of change* and not the *content of change*. It does not provide an account of *what* will change, but *how* change will occur<sup>62</sup>. This conception of social change is often characterised by the term ‘punctuated equilibrium’<sup>63</sup>. As such it draws a ‘basic analytic distinction ... between periods of institutional creation and periods of institutional stasis’ whilst asserting that ‘new structures originate during periods of crisis’ (Krasner 1984: 240).

By representing the form of political change in this way, it is possible to refine the mechanical research question and ask ‘what preceding crisis, if any led to the development and consolidation of the Freedom Agenda for MENA?’ This question appears to have a resounding answer in the form of “September 11, 2001”. The impact of that day’s events, whilst not epochal, are often cited as a catalyst for change in US foreign policy, as ‘the terrorist attacks provided a rare clarifying moment in the nation’s collective consciousness, when both American national identity and US foreign policy were reinvigorated’ (McCartney 2004: 400). As Francois Heisburg concisely summarised, ‘with the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States...began to transform its security strategy - radically altering its postulates but imprecisely reforming its doctrine and operations’ (2003: 75). The events of that day are seen as path shaping due to their ability to change American foreign policy maker’s conceptions of threat and the national interest.

Understanding political change in this form provides a conceptual framework that has clear methodological implications. It ‘links’ the events of September 11, 2001, to the adoption of the Freedom Agenda policy at a theoretical level, and therefore provides a

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<sup>62</sup> For a detailed account of this and other approaches to social change see Boudon (1986: esp. 16-8).

<sup>63</sup> This term was first introduced in political analysis by Stephen Krasner.

framework on which to support empirical data. Moreover, by linking the process of change to strategic agent's representations of the world, this form of change is not epiphenomenal. The task is to identify the meanings strategic actors construct to understand events, and not look for hidden 'causes' 'driving' action. Thus, the context of post-crisis action cannot be divorced from an understanding of the crisis, and consequently to understand the Freedom Agenda requires tracing its genealogy back to the moment of crisis that shaped its birth. This point is all the more serious if it is accepted that 'policy responds less directly to social and economic conditions than it does to the consequences of past policy' (Hall 1993: 277). Such thinking highlights the strategic manner in which policymakers develop ideas and engage with their environment in a 'constant process of evaluation and assessment of the consequences of prior policy choices' (Hay 2001: 198). As a result the moment of crisis and the manner in which it is understood are seen as pivotal, as the theoretical assertion being made is that a change in ideas precedes a change in policy. Consequently, defining and elucidating what is meant by the term 'crisis' is fundamental, and is a task that this research must now turn to.

## **5. Crisis, Narratives and Articulating Ideological-Discursive Formations**

“Crisis” is an often evoked, but ill defined term. Significantly, the literature within IR, FPA and Crises Studies tends to converge on a definition that focuses on situations that have a “high risk of war”. Such approaches have taken considerable amounts of research down the route of identifying ‘under what conditions do crises lead to war, and when are they resolved peacefully?’ (Richardson 1994: 3). As such, the aim has been to treat crises as self-evident empirical challenges, and all too often what constitutes a crisis is received uncritically as “a-problem-to-be-solved”. Once a crisis is defined by its referential descriptive elements, the next step is to go about ‘setting a strategy’ to resolve the ‘problem’. Such accounts demonstrate little appreciation or desire to analyse the observer-relative nature of ‘crises’. They consequently fail to return to first order questions about how threats are recognised, how enemies are labelled, how groups come to imagine danger and how these help constitute a ‘crisis’. Such factors are paramount to this research’s aim of understanding the formation of the Freedom Agenda and commenting on contemporary US-MENA relations.

An excellent example of this referential theory of crisis, which has understandably received considerable attention, is the Cuban Missile Crisis. According to the popular narrative the crisis was constituted by the Soviet Union strategically placing offensive weapons on Cuba<sup>64</sup> (see Young and Kent 2004: 236-41). Yet, such a description is problematic, especially once it is considered that early on Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara<sup>65</sup> identified that placing missiles on Cuba made no difference to the strategic

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<sup>64</sup> ‘The crisis which resulted from Khrushchev’s decision secretly to install intermediate and medium-range nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962’ (Young and Kent 2004: 236)

<sup>65</sup> Recorded 16 October 1962 in ExComm in transcript and reiterated at the Hawks Cay Conference held in 5-8 March 1987.



balance<sup>66</sup> (see Weldes 1999a: 84-6; Allison and Zelikow 1999: 89; Hudson 2007: 92). This creates the need for a moment of reflection and analytical distinctions to be made. What made the Cuban Missile Crisis a ‘crisis’ was not, to use John Searle’s distinction, the ‘brute facts<sup>67</sup>’; it was not the ontologically real placement of the weapons on Cuba itself. The intrinsic qualities of the weapons themselves were incapable of generating a “high risk of war”. A closer look at the historical record demonstrates that representations and meaning attached to the objects are of critical importance. Thus, as Jutta Weldes has demonstrated:

[T]hough the missiles were irrelevant to the strictly military aspects of the strategic balance, they still had to be removed ... the basic reason was US credibility. Allowing the missiles to remain in Cuba “would have politically changed the balance of power. It would have appeared to, and appearances contribute to reality” [Kennedy 1962] (Weldes 1999a: 85)<sup>68</sup>.

The introduction of ‘appearances’, is significant because it introduces the subjective hermeneutical quality that underlies an observer-dependent phenomena. This moves us closer to understanding how a particular situation becomes understood as a ‘crisis’ and therefore to answering the question ‘*what exactly is a crisis?*’ Accordingly, a closer inspection of the etymology of crisis highlights this observer-relative quality.

The term was originally used in drama and medicine, to denote ‘moments when the intensification of processes requires some resolution’ (Sztompka 1994: 34). This etymology is reflected in Habermas’ medical analogy. The thrust of the analogy asserts that a crisis is ‘the phase of illness in which it is decided whether or not the organism’s

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<sup>66</sup> Which, according to Kennedy’s National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, ‘most of us agreed with McNamara’s summary judgement at the outset, that the Cuban Missiles did not change the strategic balance- ‘not at all,’ (in Weldes 1999a: 95). For an excellent account see Errol Morris’ film *The Fog of War*.

<sup>67</sup> See John R. Searle (2005 [1969]: 50-3, 1995: 1-9).

<sup>68</sup> Moreover as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr argued in 1965, ‘the shift in the military balance would be less crucial than that in *the political balance*. Every country in the world, watching so audacious an action ninety miles from the United States, would wonder whether it could ever thereafter trust Washington’s resolution and protection’ (in Weldes 1999a: 85).

self healing powers are sufficient for recovery' (Hay 1996b: 86). The significance of such a proto-definition is, as Habermas argues, that 'the crisis cannot be separated from the viewpoint of the one who is undergoing it ... to conceive of a process as a crisis is tacitly to give it a normative meaning' (1975: 1). Thus, to term a situation as a 'crisis' is to interpret and make a judgement about that situation. Moreover, as Colin Hay argues:

[I]f we trace the etymology of the term, we find that this fusion of subjective perceptions and objective considerations is in fact crucial to the origins of the term. 'Crisis' ... literally 'to decide'- is a moment of decisive intervention, a moment of rupture and a moment of transformation (1996b: 87; also see Bell 1971; Brecher, Wilkenfeld, and Moser 1988).

This implies abrupt systemic transformation, which highlights that a crisis is not just a moment of impending demolition evident in a policy's failure, but rather a catalyst for alteration and development, 'a moment in which a new trajectory is imposed upon the system *in and through* crisis'. Thus, a crisis represents a *lived experience* 'and a moment of action and intervention in the shaping of institutions and the reshaping of the state' (Hay 1996b: 87). Consequently, a crisis is a process of destruction and construction; Dusk and Dawn (Keane 1984: 11-12). To paraphrase Wendt, crises are 'what states make of them'; that is to say that crises are what the strategic foreign policy agents bound within a strategically selective context 'make of them'.

Any conception of crisis, when understood in these terms, requires both ontologically objective and subjective considerations; of both brute and institutional facts. What constitutes a foreign policy crisis *as a crisis* is not intrinsically self-apparent in the events themselves. The events themselves, to paraphrase Mark Blyth (2003), 'do not come with instruction sheets'. Members of America's foreign policy bureaucracy did not wake up on September 11, 2001, with a guidebook telling them that "in the event of a terrorist attack using aircraft as kinetic weapons follow these procedures to achieve the exogenously given national interests...". Policy-makers were presented with

‘uncertainty’ and ‘complexity’ in a manner that strongly resembles the conditions outlined in John D. Steinbruner’s classic *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (2002: 15-18). In such circumstances not only are strategic actors faced with the ‘uncertainty condition’, but also disagreement amongst actors across a large bureaucracy. This culminates in a situation where

agents must argue over, diagnose, proselytize, and impose on others their notion of what a crisis actually *is* before collective action to resolve the uncertainty facing them can take any meaningful institutional form (Blyth 2002: 9).

Within this scheme representations ascribed to a particular situation assume critical importance. No longer is a crisis definable by reference to the existence of objective conditions external to the actors themselves. Crises are ‘constructions’ to the necessary extent that they entail *a perception of the need to make a decisive intervention* (Hay 2001: 203). Crises are part of the political process, where *strategic interpreters*, embedded in a *strategically selective context* intervene. Crises are ‘acts of intervention where sources of uncertainty are diagnosed and constructed’ (Blyth 2002: 10).

### **Crisis Narration: The Content of Political Change**

Once foreign policy actors are seen as *strategic interpreters*, the fact that they puzzle under conditions of general uncertainty should come as no surprise. Representations of September 11, 2001 become crucial not only to the initial creation of the war on terror, but additionally to post-formative policy development and institutional evolution. Herein lays the key relationship between September 11, 2001, the war on terror and the eventual formation and adoption of the Freedom Agenda. Thus, as Stuart Croft argues:

America’s ‘response’ to those attacks was not obvious, not ‘natural’, nor based on some objective standard of ‘common sense’. Policy had to be built on a narrative that could be shared amongst those who felt threatened; and that had to be America’s government and importantly, American society as a whole (2006: 2).

This point is particularly salient because it fuses the espoused definition of crisis, with

one of the key practical insights of Narrative Policy Analysis. Namely that:

Stories commonly used in describing and analysing policy issues are a force in themselves, and must be considered explicitly in assessing policy options ... these stories often resist change or modification even in the presence of contradicting empirical data, because they continue to underwrite and stabilise the assumptions for decision making in the face of high uncertainty, complexity, and polarization (Roe 1994: 2).

These points resonate and have a ‘family resemblance’ with the spirit of the cybernetic theory of decision, but it is narrative that becomes the medium in which uncertainty is suppressed. Strategic foreign policy actors attempt to assimilate the meaning of new events in terms of past experience, and therefore confidently maintain beliefs. As such narratives embed representations of ‘what has gone wrong’ and of ‘what is to be done’. Part of the process of constructing a crisis is therefore explaining the failure of previous policy by narrating its causes and establishing a model for crisis resolution. Strategic policy makers are forced to fix a narrative of the past as it is only by doing this that it is possible to create an understanding of how to proceed. Whilst punctuated evolution describes the form of change, the content and directionality of change is derived from and tied to resulting ‘crisis narratives’.

The critical importance of narratives is that they are by necessity distorted representations of events serving a social function, rather than simply mirroring ‘reality’; thus deploying a narrative is not a neutral discursive act<sup>69</sup>. When narratives are articulated they consist of logically structured plots and configurative emplotment of events and actors into a storyline, pragmatically establishing order and meaning<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, they identify forces, attribute motivations and lessons for the future, giving rise to ‘a collective understanding of how to understand the past, situate the present and act towards the

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<sup>69</sup> It involves the encoding and ascription of meaning to events, in order to represent them to the recipient narratees for the process of active interpellative decoding.

<sup>70</sup> Since Aristotle’s *Poetics*, narrative is regarded as a temporal sequencing of events into a beginning, middle and end (see Dienstag 1997: 18). The term “emplotment”, referrers to the assembly of historical events into a narrative, within a plot.

future' (Barnett 1999: 8). Story-telling becomes a communicative method of 'securing and endorsing the assumptions needed to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty and complexity' (Roe 1994: 9).

The implication of this is that narratives are generated from and help reconstruct particular theoretical substructures that influence praxis. This is important because it has been a long accepted premise of many FPA scholars that:

*[P]rofessional analysts of foreign affairs and policy makers (as well as ordinary citizens) think about problems of foreign and military policy in terms of largely implicit conceptual models that have significant consequences for the content of their thought* (Italics in original, Allison and Zelikow 1999: 3).

It is narratives that embody these in the social world and make this content publicly accessible. This 'theoretical substructure' has been given many names ranging from 'Heuristic content' to 'security imagery' to 'policy paradigm', but the point remains that it is ontologically subjective. It is inseparably tied to Dasein's existential intrinsic constitution, with being in a world that is constantly changing and vastly complex, requiring simplification by re-presentation<sup>71</sup>. But in the same process,

What the facts are, what kind of event has occurred, which interpretation of an event makes sense and can therefore become myth, and which facts are relevant to the understanding of an event are all in part determined by the narratives in which these facts and events are embedded and through which they take on meaning (Weldes 1999a: 40).

As the aim of the research is to understand the transformation of US foreign policy that led to the rise of the Freedom Agenda, then the mechanisms and processes by which perceptions of the September 11 crisis were mobilised and shaped assume a critical importance. Consequently, the process of crisis "narration" is fundamental to the empirical account of the Freedom Agenda, as this social act constructs how threats and identities are discursively constituted and born throughout a crisis. As Jutta Weldes'

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<sup>71</sup> Thus instead of the Cartesian 'Subject – Object' divide, this is a distinction between 'Organism – Environment'.

argues, ‘crises are social constructions that are forged by state officials in the course of producing and reproducing state identity’ (1999b: 37). Within this framework cultural practices of representation assume a critical importance, and have vital implications on methodological analysis. Under such conditions, there is little choice but to accept the perceptual and discursive qualities of the moment of crisis in an analysis of subsequent institutional change (Hay 2001: 204). This realisation has a very important impact on the following analysis. If it is narratives of crisis that represent events and are responded to, rather than the conditions that gave rise to the crisis, then the response to the crisis can only be studied by de-structuring<sup>72</sup> the narrative. This creates a separation between the conditions that gave rise to the crisis and the response, because the crisis narration need not be sophisticated or accurate in its understanding of the crisis context (Hay 2001: 204). As Colin Hay argues, the success of a crisis narrative

generally resides in [its] ability to provide a simplified account sufficiently flexible to narrate ... in the post-crisis world, crisis narratives must make sense to individuals of their experiences of the crisis ... they must also be sufficiently general and simple to identify clear paths of responsibility and an unambiguous sense of the response that *must* be made if catastrophe is to be averted (emphasis in original; 2001: 204)<sup>73</sup>.

This has clear implications on the methods deployed in this research. A variety of narrative discourse analysis is required that allows for theoretically-informed process-tracing, in addition to allowing the theoretical substructure of policy narratives to be rendered apparent.

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<sup>72</sup> The term “de-structuring” has been used here as an affinity to Gadamerian method. Notably the term is derived from the Heideggerian method of *Destruktion*. Using this term was a deliberate move by Gadamer to locate a common dimension between his hermeneutical project and the projects of both Heidegger and Derrida (see Michelfelder and Palmer 1989: 6-8).

<sup>73</sup> Michael Barnett could be seen as adding to this argument through his assertion that narratives provide a mechanism to “situate events and to interpret problems, to fashion shared understanding of the world, to galvanize sentiments as a way to mobilize and guide social action, and to suggest possible resolutions to current plights” (1999: 15).

## **Discourse and Ideological Effects**

Crucial to the espoused constructivist institutionalist methodology is a concern with how ideas are sedimented in ‘discourses’ which are articulated through narratives. What is being espoused by this methodology is the manner in which ‘discourses’ come to provide ‘a cognitive filter, frame or conceptual lens or paradigm through which social, political and economic developments might be ordered and rendered intelligible’ (Hay and Rosamond 2002: 151). Under these circumstances to identify a discourse is,

to point to the existence of structured sets of ideas, often in the form of implicit and sedimented assumptions, upon which actors might draw in formulating strategy and indeed, in legitimising strategy pursued for quite distinct ends (Hay and Rosamond 2002: 151).

This not only highlights the importance of agents in the construction of institutions, but also in the maintenance of an institution in its post-formative period and transformation. In this schema it is ideas that become sedimented into discourses which help to (re)produce institutional rules and practices. Consequently, by defining social institutions as codified systems of ideas and the discursive practices they sustain, the manner in which institutions are a product of and embedded in a tapestry of “ideological-discursive formations”<sup>74</sup> (IDFs) can be rendered apparent. This is of crucial importance because institutions are seen as ‘an intermediate level of social structuring, which faces Janus-like ‘upwards’ to the social formation, and ‘downwards’ to social actions’<sup>75</sup> (Fairclough 1995: 37).

An IDF can be understood as a system of signification that is complicit in producing the practice of domination and subjugation. This can be elucidated by looking at how discourse relates to ideology. In a general sense, discourse commonly refers to language,

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<sup>74</sup> Note: This is not ideological-language formations, as discourse is defined more broadly. Indeed of central interest is ideological significance as expresses in overall argumentative and narrative structure of texts.

<sup>75</sup> Janus is a reference to the Roman God of gates, doors, doorways, beginnings, and endings.

yet it has come to mean something more specific. Due to the influence of Michel Foucault on 'Discourse Theory', the term discourse is often used to define various 'systems of representation' (see Hall 2001; Foucault 2002; Foucault and Gordon 1980).

Thus, as Stuart Hall explains, by 'discourse' what is being referred to is,

a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed (Hall 1996b: 201).

Not only is the constructed and constitutive nature of knowledge recognised within such a definition, but so too is historical contingency<sup>76</sup>. Discourses provide a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment through language (Hall 2001: 72). Discourses are therefore complicit in the construction of social reality. Not only do they help (re)constitute systems of knowledge and beliefs, but in doing so they help constitute social subjects and social relations (Fairclough 1992: 36). The power of a discourse therefore culminates in its ability to constitute identities and perceived interests, and therefore help to frame interpretations of behaviour (see Klotz and Lynch 2007: 11). Moreover, discourse has the ability to create a form of power when institutionalised which is qualitatively different to that of brute physical force (see Lincoln 1989: 3-12); discourse (re)constructs *deontic powers*. The internalisation of a discourse brings with it rights, duties, obligations, commitments, authorisations, requirements, permissions and privileges; all of which 'exist as long as they are acknowledged, recognised, or otherwise accepted' (see Searle 2007: 93). As such it is discourses that help establish and constitute rules.

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<sup>76</sup> The impact of adopting this definition may appear to represent a fundamental contradiction between the early appeals to John Searle's work. The key point however is to note that with regards to truth claims this research is underpinned by a 'minimal perspectivism' or 'soft philosophical realism' and not relativism (see Prado 2006). This is akin to Richard Bernstein's (1983) *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*.



Rules, however, do not determine behaviour, but rather,

a rule is a statement that tells people *what* we *should* do. The “what” in question is a standard for people’s conduct in situations that we can identify as being alike, and can expect to encounter. The “should” tells us to match our conduct to that standard. If we fail to do what the rule tells us to, then we can expect consequences that some other rule will bring into effect when other people follow the rule calling for such consequences. All the ways in which people deal with rules - whether we follow the rules or break them, whether we make rules, change them, or get rid of them - may be called *practices* (Onuf 1998: 59).

By emphasising the role of discourses in the construction of social reality, it is clear that ‘speaking is doing’ (Gould 1998: 81), and speech acts are both representative and performative. Speaking consists of prescriptive statements that establish rule(s) for action, which are constitutive and regulative. Moreover, as relatively stable sets of rules take shape and help form institutions, the ruling structure embodied in the institution always works to the advantage of some agents at the expense of others (Onuf 1997: 15). Moreover, rule(s) provide a universal social experience that Dasein is thrown into and can never escape (see Onuf 1998: 63). Once understood in this way, discourses can be seen as constituting towards ‘rule-making’ and the ‘naturalisation’ of ideologies. This role is clear if it is accepted that whilst discourses are complicit in processes of signification, once reified into prevailing systems of rule(s), the term ideology can be used to represent ‘effects’.

Although traditionally the term *ideology* has had clear Marxist connotations towards the problematic dichotomy of ‘True’ and ‘False’ consciousness, if understood as the effects of discourse this need not be carried forward<sup>77</sup>. Whilst discourses define the rule(s), in doing so they seek to legitimise power relations which have ‘directionality’ and ‘ideology effects’ born out from the rule structure they seek to maintain. Such effects are ‘ideological’ to the extent that they pertain to ‘relations of domination/subordination,

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<sup>77</sup> Within the espoused ‘critical’ view ideology is not simply reducible to an ideational disposition, but rather as a modality of power (see Fairclough 2003: 9, 1992: 86-96).

[and] facilitates their reproduction ... what makes some discourses ideological is their connection with systems of domination',<sup>78</sup> (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 497). The crucial point to note is the manner in which this 'operates systematically to reinforce and reproduce dominant social relations' (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 497; also see Eagleton 1991; Thompson 1984; Dijk 1998; Fairclough 2003). Indeed, as Nicolas Onuf emphasises, '*rules yield rule*' (1998: 74), by being re-articulated to legitimise systems of rule and the hierarchies they help to maintain. This point is all the more pertinent if one takes the example of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The discourse signifies to the extent that it deals with the Orient [sic] as a constructed object, but this process is not separate from ideological effects and systems of rule(s). As Said points out,

Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western Style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient ([1978] 2003: 3).

To understand IDFs therefore requires an understanding of the imbricated articulations that underpin it as well as the systems of rule(s) this helps (re)construct. It is only by doing this that the Husserlian aim of 'reactivating' the IDFs, which underpin the war on terror and the Freedom Agenda's 'sedimentation',<sup>79</sup> is possible. Moreover, such a move recognises that 'understanding a practice involves theoretically and historically (re)-constructing its context' (Grossberg 1992: 55). Therefore, at an empirical level it is necessary to diachronically investigate the processes of articulation and interpellation. These are the very processes in which ideas are drawn together to produce discursive representations which culminate into IDFs more generally and the war on terror crisis narrative in particular. Once 'articulation' and 'interpellation' are seen as mechanisms,

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<sup>78</sup> The ideas that follow from here come from a synthesis of Hall, Weldes, Onuf and Searle. Thus it is crucial to understand that what I have done here is mix vocabularies to construct a worldview, the result of which is that I remain oblivious to the extent to which these authors would individually agree with this synthesis.

<sup>79</sup> Here 'sedimentation' refers to the concealment of an original act of institutionalisation, and 'reactivation' is to make such acts visible again (see Laclau and Mouffe 2001: viii).

they provide a route into analysing existing structured sets of ideas and the implicit and sedimented assumptions discourses contain. These concepts go beyond the notion that all that is important to politics is representations, and raise first order questions about ‘how dominant constructions were produced and why alternatives, which were theoretically or logically possible, were easily marginalised’ (Weldes 1999a: 119). Therefore, to understand the Freedom Agenda as a strategic policy pursued for quite distinct ends, requires an understanding of articulation and interpellation.

### **Articulation**

To utilise the concept of articulation, it clearly requires delicate unpacking<sup>80</sup>. Thus, as Stuart Hall argues,

[T]he term has a nice double meaning because ‘articulate’ means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an ‘articulated’ lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage that can be broken (Hall and Grossberg 1996: 141).

The definition that Hall provides is instructive as it draws to attention the etymological roots the term has from the Latin ‘articulāre’, which means to divide (meats etc) into single joints. An ‘articulation’ refers to ‘a joint’ and a ‘setting of bones’. Once this is acknowledged, it provides Hall with a starting point to build upon:

[A]n articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessarily, determined, absolute and essential for all time ... So the so-called ‘unity’ of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary ‘belongingness’. The ‘unity’ which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (Hall and Grossberg 1996: 141).

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<sup>80</sup> This research does not reduce all social practices to the discursive, that is to say it does not follow in the footsteps of Laclau and Mouffe’s later work in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001). The ‘worldview’ stated above is clearly a rejection of anti-foundationalist discursive idealism. As such Stuart Hall’s definition of the term is particularly instructive as ‘he elevates the importance of articulating discourse to other social forces, without going ‘over the brink’ of turning everything into discourse’ (Slack 1996: 121).

Thus, to articulate is to generate a moment of speculative ‘closure’ or ‘fixity’. It is to signify, which inevitably draws upon and works with discursive formations, and thus reconstitutes them (see Weldes 1999a: 98). This opens a situation where the existential nature of being-in-the-world determines that articulations must occur. However, the content of such articulations are neither random nor necessary, as they draw on a variety of historically contingent resources, such as tradition and language, which are historically contingent (see Weldes 1999a: 98-100). This introduces an element of the ‘conventional’ into the analysis, and if articulations embed a history/genealogy, then, they are not arbitrary but a ‘specific product of the people who have developed the language in question’ (Williams as cited in Weldes 1999a: 100). Moreover, it is through the process of articulation that speech acts are able to connote socially meaningful assumptions and logics, that is to say that they (re)present a propositional content that is larger than a strictly lexical interpretation of the content would allow; they carry a hermeneutic element that is not necessarily the same to all observers. In this manner articulations help re-construct, represent and regulate a ‘common sense’ which acts as a ‘background’ for future articulations; contingent connections are therefore presented as ‘inherently or necessarily connected, and the meanings they produce come to seem natural, come to seem an accurate description of reality’ (Weldes 1999a: 99). Thus,

Insofar as linguistic phenomena cannot represent the world, they constitute a world of their own, a world true only to itself. Words are performative, but only in a theatrical sense. By enacting the propositional content of what is spoken, any such performance simultaneously objectivizes the world it creates and hides behind its representational success<sup>81</sup> (Onuf 2001: 246).

Onuf’s theatrical metaphor is particularly fecund, as it echoes a wealth of constructivist literature that utilises the heuristic metaphor of ‘game-play’ (see Milliken 2001; Howard 2004). The use of this metaphor, however, differs greatly from that of ‘Game Theory’

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<sup>81</sup> This point reflects Searle’s notion of the “ontologically subjective”. For example we can say that the US Presidency is an observer relative phenomena, hence ontologically subjective, but it is an epistemically objective fact that G.W. Bush was the 43<sup>rd</sup> President (see Searle 2007: 82-4).

and ‘Rational Choice’ approaches. Whilst the latter indulge in the language of ‘utility calculations’ and notions of positivist objectivity, the constructivist institutionalist approach outlined above remains dedicated to a hermeneutical-understanding approach<sup>82</sup>. Such a position recognises that the social world is woven together by rules and meanings<sup>83</sup> (see Hollis and Smith 1991: 5; 68-91), and fundamentally rejects any form of reductionism/functionalism that excludes qualia<sup>84</sup>.

This puts aside the behaviouralist tradition which has dogged FPA from its conception, and places rules and meaning as central for consideration. For strategic agents rules and meaning act as resources in organised human practices, as they,

constrain and enable participants to identify others behaviour as a certain type of move in a certain type of ‘game’ and to know how to act and respond in ways which are appropriate to ‘playing’ this game (Milliken 2001: 8).

The adoption of this metaphor is significant because it challenges the notion that September 11, 2001 was ‘epochal’, yet allows the analysis to cut to the crisis moment where a decisive intervention in the form of a re-articulation of ideological discourses was being performed. Thus, out of the brute moment of destruction, brought by turning aircraft into kinetic weapons, US foreign policy agents were able to construct a crisis<sup>85</sup>, and from the narrative that pursued develop an alternative policy paradigm. Starting the analysis at this historical point in time however runs the risk of suggesting that September 11, 2001 provided an epochal moment. This is not what is being put forward, as it is rather more helpful to think of the events of September 11, 2001 as an escalation in an

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<sup>82</sup> By extension this should highlight that within FPA this study sits on the side of the Hermeneutical divide, and not that of behaviourism (see Hollis and Smith 1991: 68-91).

<sup>83</sup> Note that consistent with the above worldview, such notions are not considered causal factors.

<sup>84</sup> The use of this term is from philosophy of mind and refers to qualitative states. The use of the term is intended to signify Searle’s arguments against materialism, thus ‘Qualia really exist, so any theory like functionalism that denies their existence, either explicitly or implicitly, is false’ (2004: 59).

<sup>85</sup> To use the language of John R. Searle the events had an intrinsic quality, but the ‘crisis’ is an observer-relative phenomena, as such it is constructed. It is important to note that because something is a ‘construct’ it does not make it real. But rather recognises an intrinsic quality of Human intentionality to project itself onto the world. Searle’s analysis of money provides an excellent analogy.

already ongoing round of interactions; a rearrangement and not a rupture with the past. At the heart, since World War II, US-MENA relations have been forged by a set of intermingled partnerships and conflicts. Yet, the events of World War II did provide the catalyst for a transformation in the rules of that game, and helped establish subsequent categorisational logics embedded in America's war on terrorism discourse. This is important because the manner in which the war on terror and Freedom Agenda were constructed did not arbitrarily arise from a vacuum, but equally were not epiphenomenally determined. The construction of the crisis marks a period of 'bound innovation', in which path-shaping discourses were (re)articulated and framed by strategic agents to enact an elite project.

To enact such a project is not a simple task. Within highly complex societies like the United States, foreign policy cannot simply be imposed from the top-down; it must be articulated to the public at large and translated down the line to the level of policy implementation. In effect, policy change requires cooperation and acceptance if it is to be institutionalised (see Jackson 2005: 8). To understand the role of strategic foreign policy actors and the elite project they have termed the *Freedom Agenda*, the notion of articulation is invaluable, as it is through articulation that foreign policy actors were able to render intelligible their historical situation on September 11, 2001. Moreover, it is from this process of articulation that the crisis was constructed; as a particular phenomena which was represented in a very specific way and given very particular meanings on which action was then based. To postulate the role of articulation in this process, is to render apparent the power of the foreign policy elite. This was not merely confined to the power to *respond* to a crisis, but additionally located in *identifying, defining and constituting* a crisis discourse. This is instructive because it establishes that politics finds its sources not only in power-relationships 'but also in uncertainty ...

[g]overnments not only ‘power’ ... they also puzzle. Policy-making is a form of collective puzzlement on society’s behalf” (Heclo as cited in Hall 1993: 275-6). Thus, strategic political agents do not just project their representations onto the world with a prescriptive will, but rather they *react* to phenomena as it happens; they *react* and *prescribe*.

Strategic policy makers are forced to fix a narrative of the past as it is only by doing this that it is possible to create an understanding of how to proceed. The process of constructing a crisis discourse is therefore not imposed by outside actors, but rather constructed inside the state, by actors who are bound by the normative context in which they find themselves (see Fay 1996). In this manner narratives, and the discourses they articulate together, have cognitive and normative functions which attempt to produce perlocutionary effects. They assert a representation of the world that resonates with, and attempts to reconstruct, national identities as well as provide the foundations for conceptually sound policy programmes in the hope of producing a motivational force; they structure cognition and provide a model for future action<sup>86</sup>. The narratives embodied in the war on terrorism discourse therefore provide a key locale for analysis because they embody the articulations that gave rise to, and are embedded in, the institutionalisation of the *Freedom Agenda* policy.

### **Interpellation and Identity**

The concept of interpellation is analytically separable from articulation, yet is inseparably linked in the process of social construction. The term was first used by Louis Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, to suggest that

[I]deology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it

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<sup>86</sup> For a more specific use of these categories see Vivien Schmidt (2000).

transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' (1971: 163).

The significance of this is that the individual becomes the subject in the moment of interpellation, through the process of recognition and interaction. Therefore, interpellation represents a 'double constitutive' moment. The first moment is the construction of a subject position which creates the possibility of identity. The second is the moment in which the concrete individual is interpellated or 'hailed' into the constructed subject position and takes on that identity (Althusser 1971: 160). This second moment is insertive, as an individual's intentionality is projected into a position and takes on the 'role' that a particular identity provides<sup>87</sup>. In this moment it is possible to take on a social identity under the subject positions of 'we', 'us', 'America', 'the West' etc. which provide the basis of social action through collective intentionality.

These actions therefore provide the possibility of discourses having communicative and coordinative functions that culminate in ideological effects. Stuart Hall outlines this by arguing that different systems of representation locate a potential interpellated subject differently, for example,

[A]s worker, capitalist, wage worker, wage slave, producer, consumer, etc. Each ... *situates us* as social actors or as a member of a social group in a particular relation to the process and prescribes certain social identities for us. The ideological categories in use ... *position us* in relation to the account of the process as depicted in discourse ... All these inscriptions have effects which are real. They make a material difference, since how we act in certain situations depends on what our definitions of the situation are (1996a: 39-40).

Interpellation is a particularly useful concept within a game-play metaphor. Constructed subject positions provide 'gateways' from which to 'enter the game', whilst additionally inscribing a set of social rules and expectations that can be followed by the strategic actor in the strategically selective context. This is significant because it draws attention to

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<sup>87</sup> And can act in accordance with contingently prescribed 'rules' an identity denotes.



representations of identity and the adoption of subject positions, but also demonstrates that ‘identity is an inescapable dimension of Being, rather than an epiphenomenal property, for both individual and collective subjects’ (Campbell 1998: 226). This is all the more important because this inescapable property of Being means that all strategic actors adopt a subject position or identity, which carries with it ‘particular ways of functioning in the world’ (Weldes 1999a: 104), but is simultaneously embedded in rule(s) and power relations.

The power of narratives greatly relies on the process of interpellation. Through emplotment, subject positions are asserted and members of the audience are being asked to insert themselves into the horizon being articulated. This is crucial because the power of the articulator does not lie in direct indoctrination but in the seduction of the audience. The power of a strategic political agent’s articulations lies in their ability to *encode* and ‘frame the discursive context within which political subjectivities are constituted, reinforced and re-constituted’ (Hay 1996a: 261). However, ‘the basis of interpellation lies in the inherently imaginative process of *decoding* through which we, the readers, inject ourselves into the narrative structure’ (Hay 1996a: 262). The moment of dialogue is therefore a political moment of negotiation in which the articulator and audience fuse in a process that culminates in degrees of recruitment or rejection, which is anything but passive or static. The concept of interpellation therefore helps highlight both the conflictual and the cooperative side of politics, which is an integral part of any society.

By introducing the concept of interpellation it is possible to stress the importance of the “9/11” crisis narrative in constructing consent for the war on terrorism. The power of a narrative ‘stems from its complexity’ (Polletta 2006: vii), in its ability to fill a story board by articulating multiple aspects of social reality. Indeed, ‘even the most ‘simple’ of

stories is embedded in a network of relations that are sometimes astounding in their complexity' (Cobley 2001: 2). Yet, despite the complexity of its construction, to be successfully interpellated, the narrative needs to resonate with a broad audience (see Weldes 1999a: 104). This creates a situation in which it is important to recognise that,

Foreign policy problems are ... not handled *de nova* as their solution is written into a discursive terrain that is already partially structured through previously articulated and institutionalised identities. These structuring discourses stretch from the general and abstract, from 'national identity', 'national interest' and 'strategic interests', to particular one like 'Danish identity', 'civilisation', 'developed' and 'European'. To argue policies that radically break with these constructions is not impossible, but it is a daunting task, in particular when political opposition can mobilise these historically (re)produced constructions (Hansen 2006: 26).

This generates a milieu in which identities are concurrently both a product of and the justification for foreign policy. As such, the manner in which identities are articulated in the crisis narrative is of crucial importance, not least as a starting point for any systematic textual analysis.

The process of interpellation is inherently linked to narratives and identity through the process of subjectification and identification. To stipulate a decoder is to raise questions concerning the politics of location, in which the Subject is 'dislocated'<sup>88</sup>, but interpellated into subject positions made possible within discourses. When defined in this way, it is possible to see how 'identity is the understanding of oneself in relation to others' (Barnett 1999: 9; Huntington 2005: 21-33). As something which both individuals and groups can take possession of rather than be intrinsic or essentialist. Identity, as an expression of socially recognised differences, is, *ipso facto*, overwhelmingly constructed. Under such circumstances identities are never unified, but 'fragmented and fractured'; the interactive process itself helps produce multiple constructions which can be antagonistic as they intersect (Hall 2000: 17). 'National identity', which underlies the very concept of the

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<sup>88</sup> That is, dependent upon an 'outside' that both denies them and provides the conditions of their possibility (Du Gay, Evans, and Redman 2000: 2).

*national* interest, is one such construction (see Anderson 1983). As Michael Barnett argues,

Identities, in short, are not personal or psychological they are fundamentally social and relational, defined by the actor's interaction with the relationship to others; therefore, all political identities are contingent, dependent on the actor's interaction with others and place within an institutional context. This relational perspective informs the view that national identities are partly formed in relation to other nation states - that the identities of political actors are tied to their relationship to those outside the boundaries of the community and territory, respectively (Barnett 1999: 9).

Apparent in this definition is the extent to which identities depend on the construction of an 'inside' and 'outside' status; and collectively an 'us' and a 'them' that exists in the socially negotiated imagination of the identity holder. This contingency highlights not only the historical nature of 'the nation', but also the manner in which identities are in constant motion as the process of interaction and negotiation unfolds. National identities must themselves be narrated and (re)presented in a collectively understood 'geobiography'. This relies on strategic agents articulating the constitutive inside and outside, which relies on logics of equivalence and difference to open and close the boundaries of the nation. The notions of articulation and interpellation therefore highlight the communicative, coordinative, cognitive and normative functions of IDFs in (re)constructing the 'United States' as much as the 'foreign Others'; nation-building is therefore a constant two way process 'internally' and 'externally'. As such it is possible to agree with Richard Jackson's assertion that,

[T]he language of the 'war on terrorism' is not simply an objective or neutral reflection of reality; nor is it merely accidental or incidental ... Rather, it is a deliberately and meticulously composed set of words, assumptions, metaphors, grammatical forms, myths and forms of knowledge - it is a carefully constructed discourse - that is designed to achieve a number of key political goals: to normalise and legitimise the current counter-terrorist approach; to empower the authorities and shield them from criticism; to discipline domestic society by marginalising dissent or protest; and to enforce national unity by reifying a narrow conception of national identity. The discourse of the 'war on terrorism' has a clear political purpose; it works for someone and for something; it is an exercise of power (Jackson 2005: 2).

## **6. Adopting Research Methods**

Over the last two chapters this research has explicitly set out the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie a constructivist institutionalist methodology. It has established a “worldview”, to aid analysis and generate a greater understanding of the Freedom Agenda. However, it has not set out the techniques and procedures that were used to collect and analyse data. Nor has it set out the research methods adopted, and the tools that were utilised. The methods that were adopted, however, are a direct result of this methodology. By positing the importance of narratives in the construction of crises, and the role of articulation and interpellation in underpinning IDFs, a set of methods was necessary to allow an analysis of these phenomena. Consequently, the constructivist institutionalist methodology outlined above requires a set of methods with a dual function. The first is to conduct a theoretically informed *process-tracing* of the emergence of the Freedom Agenda. This allows the evolutionary logics of the Freedom Agenda to be rendered apparent, it is therefore explicitly concerned with how the policy was formed and evolved over time. This unambiguously seeks to answer the research question ‘How and why did the Freedom Agenda develop?’ The second function of the methods adopted, is to allow a *textually oriented discourse analysis* to be conducted. This allows a hermeneutic dimension to be rendered apparent, and is therefore concerned with the ideas, beliefs and definitions that underpin the Freedom Agenda. This unambiguously seeks to answer the research question: ‘How was the Freedom Agenda constituted and why was it done in this way?’

Notably these two research questions are analytically separable, but are strongly interrelated. One cannot trace the process by which the Freedom Agenda emerged, without analysing the evolving meanings that underpin it. Similarly one cannot fully understand the meanings that underpin the Freedom Agenda without tracing the context

from which these meanings emerged. Consequently, this dual movement requires both a diachronic survey of the Freedom Agenda's historicity, by locating and investigating practices and logics in a larger historical and social context, and a discourse analysis which focuses on interpreting a broad range of texts. The adoption of this dual function takes a wide interdisciplinary perspective which combines social and textual analysis (see Fairclough 2003: 2-3, 1995, 1992). This perspective recognises that textual analysis is insufficient in edifying the relationship between discourse and social practice, and therefore reinforces it by combining a 'textually oriented discourse analysis' with a social approach to Foreign Policy Analysis. Such a method maintains the premises that,

- Language is an irreducible part of social life; and therefore foreign policy.
- One way of doing foreign policy research is through a focus on language, and therefore the deployment of discourse analysis.
- This deployment can be reinforced by other analytical strategies and in this research is done so with a social and institutional analysis to foreign policy; as set out by the constructivist institutionalist methodology.

Consequently, this study resonates with and draws upon other research carried out on the war on terrorism more broadly, such as Richard Jackson's (2005) *Writing the War on Terrorism* and Stuart Croft's (2006) *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*. However, it is qualitatively different. Not only is the focus explicitly on the Freedom Agenda, but this research adds value to such studies by diachronically analysing post-crisis transformation in US foreign policy discourse. This recognises a distinctive quality of discourses that is in fact embedded in the etymology of the term. Discourse, which obtains its roots from the Latin *discursus*, literally means to 'run about' or to 'run here and there', which captures a sense of movement, interaction, haste and disturbance (see

Virilio 1991: 113-4). A diachronic analysis allows this sense of movement to be captured, and highlights how the Freedom Agenda is the result of political processes; it is a social response to a crisis and consequently, the focus of this study is to foreground the lexicon of definitions, rules and discourses that construct the *Freedom Agenda* as a policy paradigm, and elucidate the ideological effects of constructing a policy in this way at the level of policy implementation.

### **The Freedom Agenda Loci**

Significantly, positing a constructivist institutionalist methodology raises a series of research questions that can not be easily dismissed. Such questions concern author-ity, such as “whose articulations are important in the construction of crises narratives?” and “whose articulations are important in the (re)construction of the Freedom Agenda?” Simply put, these questions require an answer to larger questions concerning ‘who makes US Foreign and Security Policy?’ The answers to such questions have a significant impact on the methods adopted, because ultimately they shape the data selection process. Determining whose discourse is to be traced and de-structured, ultimately determines the selection of texts to be analysed.

This research consequently makes an analytical decision to regard foreign policy production as an elite project. This accepts Richard Jackson’s theoretically based but empirically informed premise that ‘the war on terrorism is an elite-led project and these elites have provided the primary justifications and overall vision. It thus seems logical to focus primarily on their words’ (2005: 26). Thus, it is with caution that it is noted that US foreign policy is run by contingently bound elites. Such caution is undoubtedly required because the term ‘elite’ *could* imply absolute social cohesion among strategic agents who are entirely divorced from civil society. This is not the intended definition.

Rather the term is intended to refer to the limited number of strategic agents located in specific parts of the state system; to custodians of the machinery of the state<sup>89</sup>. Thus, if foreign policy is regarded not as a noun, but as a continuous *process*, then it is possible to view the elite as those in control of this ongoing decision-making process. Under such circumstances ‘political elites’ exist in addition to ‘politico-technocratic elites’ which culminates in a situation where ‘Foreign Policy may be ‘for the people’ in a fundamental sense, but it is largely still made on their behalf by cognoscenti’ (Hill 2003: 42).

The decision to focus on elites and their production of the Freedom Agenda, is purely analytical, and subscribed to based on its ability to refine the focus of this research. Within such a pluralistic society as the United States domestic consent of foreign policy cannot simply be disregarded. There are other actors outside government that compete with the state in the construction of public narratives. Indeed, the role of the media in the process of representation has been well documented (see McAlister 2005; Croft 2006: 189-3; 226-33). Although such research is fruitful, any attempt to seriously integrate more pluralistic factors into this research would simply make it too porous, unwieldy and go beyond the focus of the research questions. Consequently, this research fits within broader literature employing discursive methods in ‘foreign policy studies’. The focus of such literature was best summarised by Jennifer Milliken, who outlines a contemporary focus on discursive productivity,

by analysing how an elite’s ‘regime of truth’ made possible certain courses of action by the state (e.g. intervening militarily in the Gulf War) while excluding other policies as unintelligible or unworkable or improper (e.g. doing nothing,

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<sup>89</sup> The conception of state being ascribed is similar to that of Jessop and Poulantzas, where the state is a strategic site, ‘a specific institutional ensemble with multiple boundaries, no institutional fixity and no pre-given formal or substantive unity’ (Jessop 1990: 267; Poulantzas 1978). Or as Colin Hay notes ‘The state is a dynamic and constantly unfolding system. Its specific form at a given moment in time in a particular national setting represents a ‘crystallization of past strategies’ which privileges certain strategies and actors over others’ (2006b: 75).

seeking a diplomatic settlement) (1999: 236)<sup>90</sup>.

Consequently, a qualitative approach was taken, focusing on interpreting the Bush administration's discourses as they pertain to the Freedom Agenda and its evolutionary logic. However, this was widened to include other 'political elites'. Thus, although this research focused on President Bush and senior members of his administration, it moved vertically down through the executive branch, but also horizontally across the legislature and judiciary. Such an emphasis reflects the manner in which

The executive departments of government, and the political appointees who head them, are at the core of the foreign policy-making process, particularly the Department of State and Defense (Wittkopf et al. 2002: 360).

But crucially recognises Christopher Hill's assertion that 'the United States has the most developed system of legislative participation in foreign affairs' (Hill 2003: 132).

### **Text Selecting and Generating**

In chapter one of this research it was argued that the Freedom Agenda is a liberal grand strategy that has culminated in coercion, legislation and a set of institutional practices. However, these practices are based on a series of assumptions, definitions and beliefs that are embedded within and a product of a master narrative. Such a narrative requires an entire language to enable it to be communicated. This language is contained and stored within 'texts'. A text is an act of spoken or written language, but can also be attributed to symbols. It is therefore an umbrella term for speeches, interviews, hearings, legislation, web postings, government documents, internal government reports and documents, press releases, letters, emails, and written articles by leading figures within the administration. Thus, as Richard Jackson argues,

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<sup>90</sup> For examples of this being conducted see David Campbell (1993); Jutta Weldes and Diana Saco (1996) and Jennifer Milliken (2001).



text...sets out the parameters of official thinking and forms the basis of policy and action; it establishes the core principles, assumptions and knowledge ... implies the kind of actions that will be undertaken and provides the overall story or narrative for public understanding of the issue (2005: 17).

By accepting the premise that foreign policy is an elite project, a logical consequence was to gather texts that pertained to the Freedom Agenda, but which were produced by elite actors within the state system. Text selection was based on the two key criteria. Firstly, the importance of the source, which was determined by either a high level of public attention or which was important symbolically. The second was relevance to the Freedom Agenda policy. This produced around 800 texts ranging from the time that G. W. Bush was running for Presidential office, to his last days in office. It therefore covered the period from September 23, 1999 to January 19, 2009. Undoubtedly, this favoured analysing texts produced/delivered by President Bush, because of his central role in communicating the Freedom Agenda to the public. Moreover, the role of President allowed him to be a privileged storyteller, with the author-ity to utilise the power of the state to garner media attention. However, text selection was not isolated to Presidential speeches and public addresses; it included remarks and speeches made by senior officials within the administration, congressional hearings, legislation, and official documents produced by the administration and the democracy bureaucracy. There was a high level of access to such sources in the form of speeches, interviews, press briefings, press releases, policy documents, fact-sheets, reports to Congress, legislation and congressional debates. Notably, in many cases, these sources intentionally target a public audience and were transcribed into public records and official department websites.

By selecting sources based on their association with the foreign policy elite, text selection was highly specific. However this was supplemented with semi-structured interviews carried out in Washington DC between May to July 2008. The focus of these interviews was on generating a deeper understanding of the Freedom Agenda. Notably a key

objective of this research was to gather primary data from the policy actors that work within the Freedom Agenda institutions. However this proved to be an impossible undertaking for reasons of access. A significant contributor to this lack of access was the inability to secure a visa due to racial profiling, which resulted in a seven month delay in this research. Under section 221(g) of the US Immigration and Nationality Act a visa application made on November 7, 2007, was sent for “additional administrative processing”. This was a result of the US Embassy in London being unable to “exclude the applicant as a possible match to an ineligible person” (see Appendix 1) (see Hassan 2008b). This raised serious unforeseeable problems, notably because it made access to the Department of State problematic; how does one interview members of the very institution that is excluding you access<sup>91</sup>?

Once a visa was granted however access issues remained. Not only were requests for interviews met with a wall of silence, but in some cases with hostility. Such situations in-and-of themselves provide a significant insight into the US counter-terrorism effort and sensitivity of researching the Freedom Agenda. However to bypass these issues, semi-structured interviews were targeted at policy experts outside government; at institutions such as the *Brookings Institute*, the *Council on Foreign Relations* and the *National Endowment for Democracy* (NED). This was not an ideal situation, but rather a pragmatic step taken as a direct result of silence and hostility from members of the Bush administration. The interview length varied from one to two hours, and proved fruitful by targeting individuals that had worked closely with the Department of State on issues regarding the Freedom Agenda.

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<sup>91</sup> Multiple attempts were made to contact officials in the State Department and Freedom Agenda institutions by email and telephone. Individuals were traced through both the State Department website and contact details available in the *Federal Yellow Book* directory (published by Leadership Directories, Inc.). However, out of the forty three individuals contacted only one agreed to talk directly with me (under the condition of anonymity). This however failed to materialise because the interviewee withdrew at the last minute.

## Overview of Data Analysis Methods

Once texts were selected they were placed into QSR NVivo 8 database. This helped generate a series of just under 800 documents within an NVivo project. This allowed a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) to be conducted. This method was specifically chosen to allow a large volume of texts to be made more physically manageable. Thus, the software does not, and cannot, carry out analysis. Rather it is a tool that allows manual labour to be cut, so that more time can be spent focusing on the analysis of texts.

Upon entering each text into the NVivo project, it was given a title. The title started with the year, month and day in which the text was produced. This allowed the texts to be ordered temporally and chronologically analysed. Accordingly, a theoretically informed process-tracing of the Freedom Agenda was conducted, which allowed significant periods of policy formation and alteration to be identified. Examples of the title format include:

- 1999\_09\_23 Citadel Period of Consequences (G.W. Bush)
- 2000\_10\_05 Vice Presidential Candidate Debate (R. Cheney & J. Liberman)
- 2006\_08\_07 ME Crisis between Lebanon and Israel (G.W. Bush & C. Rice)

*Step one* of the data analysis process was to conduct a detailed review of the texts, to maintain consistency of format throughout the database. *Step two* required subjecting the text to analysis, in which sections of the text were manually coded. This was done by making extensive notes using the DataBit function and coding the data at each source. Thus, a “Code whilst Browsing” method was adopted that created a series of “Free Nodes” (See Appendix 2 & 3). Once completed, *step three* was undertaken, which reviewed the complete series of free nodes for overlaps and inconsistencies.

Consequently, the coding process was an active research process culminating in iterative yet cumulative manoeuvres. *Step four* consisted of a series of computer assisted searches, notably focusing on word frequency, co-occurrence between nodes, and to ensure completeness. *Step five* consisted of converting “Free Nodes” into “Tree Nodes”, which created clusters of nodes around hierarchical concepts. For example, nodes pertaining to the construction of American identity were brought together under Tree Node title “Representations of American Identity” (See Appendix 4). Once completed *step five* was to review the project to ensure accuracy, detail and consistency. Adopting these steps allowed greater familiarity with the texts and a rigorous analysis to take place.

### **Coding Text using Narrative Discourse Analysis**

Discourse Analysis, as David Howarth has argued, has ‘no purely algorithmic methods and procedures of social science investigation’. Consequently, ‘in each instance of concrete research, theorists have to modulate and articulate their concepts to suit the particular problems they are addressing’ (2000: 133). In this theoretically driven but empirically rich research, the solution to this was directly derived from the constructivist institutionalist methodology outlined above. By asserting the need for both *process-tracing* and a *textually oriented discourse analysis*, the constructivist institutionalist methodology required a narrative discourse analysis to be conducted. Ultimately, this allowed the ideological-discursive formation that underpins the Freedom Agenda to be identified, whilst also tracing the process by which the Freedom Agenda emerged and evolved.

To conduct a narrative discourse analysis and code each individual text within the NVivo project, each text was subjected to a series of questions:

- How are actors in the text represented and how are identities constructed?

- What motives are ascribed to actors?
- What argument structures are used; both “rational” and “emotional”?
- How are events sequenced within the text?
- What representations of the past, present and future are embedded within the text?
- Is there a plot running through the text and cases of emplotment?
- What causal links are ascribed to, or inferred within the text?
- What ontological and epistemological claims are being made within the text?
- What assumptions, beliefs and values underlie the language of the text?
- What articulations are being made within the text?
- What are the histories and embedded meanings of the important words in the text?
- What meanings are implied by the context of the text, and how does this context alter the meaning of the words?
- What patterns can be observed in the language, and how do different parts of the text relate to each other?
- How consistent are the discursive constructions within the text?
- What regulative and constitutive ‘rules’ are (re)-constructed within the text?
- What are the power functions of the discursive constructions?
- What knowledge or practices are normalised and legitimised by the language of the text?
- How does the language create, reinforce or challenge power relations?
- How does the current text relate to the previous text?
- To what degree does the current text represent continuity and/or change with the previous texts?

As a direct result of these questions individual “free nodes” were created, which were then organised into hierarchical node trees. The results that follow from this approach were distinguished by their oscillation between specific textual analysis<sup>92</sup>, and the ‘order of discourse’ which was a ‘relatively durable social structuring of language which is itself one element of the relatively durable structuring and networking of social practices’

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<sup>92</sup> Which included analysis of vocabulary, grammar, co-occurrence, themes, nominalizations and so forth (see Fairclough 2003).

(Fairclough 2003: 3; 220). Specific attention was paid to recurring themes and the manner in which a narrative is constructed and framed. This latter stage was completed by analysing small parts of texts, whole texts and across texts. The purpose of which will be to rigorously reconstruct the dominant logics, representations and intentions that are put forward in relation to the Freedom Agenda. The fruits of this labour produced the analysis that follows.

***Section Three:***  
***The Punctuating “9/11 Crisis” and the Evolution of  
the Freedom Agenda***

*Each cultural work is a vision of a moment, and we must juxtapose that vision with the various revisions it later provoked ... In addition, one must connect the structures of a narrative to the ideas, concepts, experiences from which it draws support.*

**Edward Said (1994: 79)**

## **7. The Strategically Selective Context of the Post-Cold War Era: Paradigm Lost and Freedom Defined**

To elucidate how and why the Freedom Agenda was developed necessarily requires a brief analysis of the post-Cold War context, and the 2000 Presidential election campaign. This point has been mute in the literature engaging with the Freedom Agenda, much to its detriment. To a significant extent, this period has been ignored due to assertions that G. W. Bush was a “realist” but “9/11 changed everything”. This post-9/11 tyranny of the epochal has become a dominate contention in academic deliberations. However, a closer inspection of G. W. Bush’s presidential campaign is fruitful because it is in this period that the candidate publicly set out an ideological-discursive formation that would in many ways characterise his administration’s tenure in office. Moreover, by understanding the post-Cold War period it is possible to generate a greater understanding of continuity and change in US foreign policy. This point is particularly pertinent to the construction of the Freedom Agenda, as it was between late 1999 and early 2001 that candidate Bush began to articulate and define concepts such as ‘freedom’, ‘power’, ‘peace’, and the ‘national interest’. Consequently, understanding how these terms were deployed prior to September 11, 2001 can significantly inform any understanding of how the terms were used post-hoc and then came to be embedded in the institutionalisation of the Freedom Agenda.

In this chapter, it will be shown that candidate Bush tried to establish himself as ‘Reaganesque’ prior to taking office in January 2001. This was done in an attempt to legitimate his candidacy and provide an overarching rationale to US foreign policy, which had been lost in the post-Cold War era. Yet, although candidate Bush failed to do this, he presented the need for a foreign policy based on American primacy and a ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’ (Bush 1999\_11\_19). Ultimately, this



‘internationalism’ was an all encompassing term calling for the promotion of neoliberal marketisation. Inscribed in such policy prescriptions candidate Bush was promising to utilise American power to extend ‘peace’ and ‘freedom’ and ‘renew America’s purpose’, and ultimately set out ideas that undoubtedly influenced the manner in which the Freedom Agenda was eventually constructed.

### **Candidate G. W. Bush and the Post-Cold War Era**

That the collapse of the Soviet Union had a profound impact on American foreign policy throughout the 1990s has become something akin to received wisdom. Gone was the overarching rationale of containment, and in swept a period of uncertainty about how to use American global supremacy as the lone superpower. In effect, the fall of the Soviet Union led to a collapse of an ideational orthodoxy used to guide US foreign policy, leaving policy-makers deprived of consensus and an overarching paradigm for routine puzzle-solving. This was reflected in American’s wider political discourse, as the desire for a ‘peace dividend’ fractured both the Democrat and Republican parties on Capitol Hill. Whilst the Democrats were struggling to compose a method of marrying progressive policies with American power, the Republican Party fractured into isolationists, contract Republicans, realist pragmatists and neoconservative idealists (Chollet and Goldgeier 2008: 318-26; Bowen and Dunn 1996: 1-29). This made achieving a foreign policy consensus on most issues highly problematic, as this historical period became defined by the *mêlée* being waged in Washington and the nation more generally.

Accordingly, exactly where on the political agenda foreign policy should feature was being re-examined and redefined as domestic issues began to be deemed just as, or more, important for some. As various strategically selective political actors began to view the

strategically selective context differently, the “market place of ideas” was filled with policy prescriptions that would have been contentious in the Cold War period. This was certainly reflected in President Clinton’s approach that ‘put America’s commercial interests - promoting exports and opening markets - on par with the country’s traditional security interests’ (Sanger 2001: 65). This marked an important adjustment in the country’s foreign policy priorities and demonstrated a recognition that ‘the Cold War had ended and that Europe and Japan had long put their competitive interests first’<sup>93</sup> (Sanger 2001: 65). Moreover, it represented a noteworthy downgrading of Cold War objectives by revising the previously circumscribed policy options of the Cold War and asserting that ‘there is no clear division today between what is foreign and what is domestic’ (Clinton in Bowen and Dunn 1996: 21). This is not to argue that a radical reform had taken place. Given the profound nature of the change within the international system, numerous critics have argued that ‘many of the broader objectives sought by the United States since 1989 actually bear a strong resemblance to those it pursued before the end of the Cold War’, which included a rejection of isolationism, support for democracy, and a tendency to see the new order as conterminous with American national interests (Cox 1995: 5). Yet, without an overarching rationale or purpose to American Foreign policy the concepts of ‘security’ and ‘threats’ began to broaden beyond traditional military views and existential threats to the state. Undoubtedly, this was reflected in the Clinton administration’s endeavour to understand globalisation and the strategically selective context this presented.

That American foreign policy lost a sense of purpose with the collapse of the Soviet Union was captured by the very term “post” Cold War, as such a label revealed that

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<sup>93</sup> This was reflected in Clinton’s successful establishment of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round of General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (see Bowen and Dunn, 1996, pp.24-5).

people knew where they had been, but not where they were, much less where they were heading (Haass 1997: 21). Consequently, two predominant temperaments prevailed in this period of uncertainty; pessimistic declinism and triumphant exhilarance. The first of these temperaments was captured in Paul Kennedy's (1987) bestseller, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Spanning from 1500 to 1980 Kennedy laid out a pattern of rise and decline that Great Powers have undergone. Yet, he extended his analysis through to the end of the twentieth century predicting the rise of powers such as China, Japan, and the European Economic Community, whilst predicting the decline of the Soviet Union and the United States. This decline was regarded as an 'enduring fact' given US 'imperial overstretch' and the notion that the 'United States' global interests and obligations [were] far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously' (see Kennedy 1987: 565-698).

Conversely, it was Francis Fukuyama's (1989) *National interest* article titled *The End of History?* which came to represent triumphant exhilarance. In an attempt to understand the importance of the end of the Cold War, Fukuyama sought to place the events into a 'larger conceptual framework'. Consequently, drawing on Hegel and Kojève, he set out an argument that described a new state of history characterised by the 'triumph of the West, of the Western *idea*'. For Fukuyama this represented an 'unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism' evident in the 'total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism'. This constituted the 'end of history', defined as the 'the end point of mankind's [sic] ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'. This was a bold and encouraging argument, which placed the 'West' into the category of 'post-historical' whilst the "Rest" was classified in the 'historical' phase of this teleological progression. Relatedly, whilst offering no policy prescriptions, the reader of the article could conclude

either that America should support democracy wherever possible, or that ultimately the ‘historical’ part of the world would inevitably succumb to, and enter, the post-historical bloc (see Chollet and Goldgeier 2008: 21-3; Callinicos 1995: 15-43). Philosophical problems aside, this was a deeply influential article that permeated post-Cold War America.

These two temperaments offered contrasting views of the politically feasible, practical and desirable, for America’s foreign policy. On the one hand, pessimistic declinism suggested a cautious more prudent foreign policy, and if taken to the logical extreme it could even be used to advocate neo-isolationism. Yet, on the other hand, triumphant exhilarance suggested a bold inevitability of Western superiority; cautious or not the ‘historical’ bloc would inevitability arrive at the ‘post-historical’ phase of human existence. In essence, triumphant exhilarance seemed to provide a purpose; to ensure that other countries arrive at, and accept, the dominance of economic and political liberalism. This dichotomy is parsimonious; however it provides a heuristic device for understanding the prevailing circumstances in which the 2000 presidential campaign was fought. Moreover, it allows the political platform that George W. Bush ran on to be explicated.

That G. W. Bush ran for presidential office claiming that he would reinvent a national purpose was not unusual. All American presidencies aspire to provide symbolic leadership and a reinvention of national purpose, whether it is in the form of a New Deal, New Frontiers, New Foundations, New World Order, New Covenant or Democratic Enlargement (Dumbrell 1997: 54-6; Chollet and Goldgeier 2008: 315). Candidate Bush declared his early offering at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, proposing a ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’ (Bush 1999\_11\_19). This was well received by commentators such as William Kristol and Robert Kagan, who argued that the speech,

[R]epresent[ed] the strongest and clearest articulation of a policy of American global leadership by a major political figure since the collapse of the Soviet Empire. In his call for renewed American strength, confidence, and leadership, Bush stakes a claim to the legacy of Ronald Reagan (1999: 7).

Appearing to be the heir of the Republican darling Ronald Reagan was certainly the intention of this stagecraft. Why else would you hold a speech in the symbolic terrain of the Reagan Library? This was a sure sign of the admiration the candidate had for the former President<sup>94</sup>, and demonstrated how the Reagan ‘philosophy’, of ‘limited government, tax cuts, and of peace through strength’, would act as candidate Bush’s loadstar (see Bush 2001: 177). Given such circumstances, it is odd that so many commentators have referred to the ‘pre-9/11’ Bush as a realist. Indeed, Thomas Carothers, a leading authority on democracy promotion and democratisation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has argued that,

[D]uring the 2000 presidential campaign Bush and his advisers had made it very clear that they favoured great-power realism over idealistic notions such as nation-building or democracy promotion (Carothers 2004).

That Bush and his team were seen as realists was certainly helped by candidate Bush claiming, in his ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’ speech, that:

In the defense of our nation, *a president must be a clear-eyed realist*. There are limits to the smiles and scowls of diplomacy. Armies and missiles are not stopped by stiff notes of condemnation. They are held in check by strength and purpose and the promise of swift punishment (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

This is an often quoted paragraph used to uphold the dominant narrative concerning Bush’s so called realism. Yet, what is often omitted is a series of caveats that were included later in the speech:

Some have tried to pose a choice between *American ideals* and *American interests*—between who we are and how we act. *But the choice is false*. America, by decision and destiny, *promotes political freedom – and gains the most when*

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<sup>94</sup> Indeed President Bush would later write in an autobiographical account of his journey to the White House “It was a great honor to meet president-elect Reagan ... President Reagan was resolute in his goals and confident in his philosophy. He set a clear agenda of limited government, of economic growth through tax cuts, and of peace through strength. His Presidency was a defining one ... President Reagan realized the greatness of America was found not in government in Washington, but in the hearts and souls of individual Americans” (Bush 2001: 177).

*democracy advances ... I will address these responsibilities ... To each, I bring the same approach: A distinctly American internationalism. Idealism, without illusions. Confidence, without conceit. Realism, in the service of American ideals* (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

Such a statement gives pause for thought, not least because it seems to suggest a much more complex vignette than the label “realist” captures. Bush’s ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’ openly inscribed a tension between both realism and idealism. This dialectic is unsurprising given the extent to which the battle between idealism and realism has shaped the history of American foreign policy. However, upon closer analysis of the Bush campaign it is clear that these two larger philosophical bodies of thought were playing out through the temperament of pessimistic declinism and triumphant exhilarance embedded in a very distinct ideological-discursive formation.

The prevalence of pessimistic declinism was certainly evident in the Bush campaign’s critique of President Clinton. During the 2000 Presidential campaign, candidate Bush ran on a foreign policy platform that sought to discredit the Clinton administration, and therefore undermine the appeal of his political opponent Al Gore. At the 2000 Republican National Convention, he asserted that,

[F]or eight years, the Clinton/Gore administration has coasted through prosperity ... Our current president embodied the potential of a generation ... to what end? ... no great purpose ... Little more than a decade ago, the Cold War thawed ... But instead of seizing this moment, the Clinton/Gore administration has squandered it. We have seen a steady erosion of American power and an unsteady exercise of American influence (Bush 2000\_08\_15).

In juxtaposition to Al Gore’s Clintonesque platform, the Bush campaign began to frame a narrower definition of what constituted the nation’s interests; emphasising American power and primacy as the lone superpower (see Krauthammer 2001). Consequently, Thomas Carothers was correct in asserting that the Bush campaign derided nation-building. In the first presidential candidate debate, when questioned directly about when

it would be appropriate to use force, candidate Bush replied:

Well, if it's in our *vital national interest*, and that means whether *our territory is threatened* or *people could be harmed*, whether or not ... *our defense alliances are threatened*, whether or not *our friends in the Middle East are threatened*. That would be a time to seriously consider the use of force ... *I don't think we can be all things to all people in the world. I think we've got to be very careful when we commit our troops. The vice president [Al Gore] and I have a disagreement about the use of troops. He believes in nation-building. I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders ... I believe we're overextended in too many places.* And therefore I want to *rebuild the military power* (Bush 2000\_10\_03).

By making reference to an overextended and declining military Bush certainly appealed to pessimistic declinism. Candidate Bush sought to construct an image of himself as a more prudent candidate, willing to use force, but if and only if more traditional security threats presented themselves. Yet, embedded in the candidate's response was something of a paradox. Why was it necessary to rebuild military power, if the number of military missions was to be lower as a result of abandoning smaller nation-building exercises?

In part, the Bush campaign's answer to this came in the form of a stark description of deep military decline:

Not since the years before Pearl Harbor has our investment in national defense been so low as a percentage of GNP. Yet, rarely has our military been so freely used – an average of one deployment every nine weeks in the last few years. Since the end of the Cold War, our ground forces have been deployed more frequently, while our defense budget has fallen by nearly 40 percent (Bush 1999\_09\_23).

Invoking Pearl Harbor is a powerful discursive tool. In this context, Bush was clearly trying to invoke a sense of danger and the potential results such military weakness could invoke. Conspicuously, this depiction of military decline was silent on the fact that the US had the world's largest defence expenditure and between 1999 to 2000 outspent the next six nations combined<sup>95</sup> (Chamberlin 2004: 5). Nor was it mentioned that defence cuts began under President Bush Snr, or that 1999 saw the Pentagon receive the biggest

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<sup>95</sup> This included mainland China, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Russia and Germany which totalled approximately US \$275,100 million, compared to the US military expenditure of \$281,000 million.

financial boost since the end of the Cold War (Chollet and Goldgeier 2008: 297). The prevailing narrative was simply that:

Eight years ago, the Clinton-Gore administration inherited a military ready for dangers and challenges facing our nation. The next president will inherit a military in decline. But, if the next president is George W. Bush, the days of decline will be over (Bush 2000\_11\_03).

What is perhaps more interesting about the narrative presented by the Bush campaign however, is that it embedded a deeper more ideological answer as to why the US should rebuild military power. In particular, Bush's 'Distinctly American Internationalism' articulated the need for American primacy inspired by the ideals of hegemonic stability theory. It was throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s that advocates of a primacy strategy had drawn on hegemonic stability theory to begin advancing an alternative policy to containment. Their interpretation had led to the conclusion that peace is a collective good which is best secured by the unqualified and unchallenged preponderance of US power. The logic being espoused was that peace and stability could be secured by having such overwhelming preponderance that others would not dare attack (see Nye 2007: 64-5). This was the view put forward in President Bush's inaugural address in January 2001,

*we will build our defenses beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge ... The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom* (Bush 2001\_01\_20).

Much has been made about the last part of this quote, notably because the phrase '*a balance of power that favors freedom*', was later used by the Bush administration in its 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States*; which many regard as a document to legitimate the 2003 Iraq war. That this phrase was used in President Bush's inaugural address has been widely overlooked. Yet, what is important about the notion of a 'balance of power' in the context used by President Bush, is that it was not referring to an equilibrium. The superficial articulation of the two terms 'balance of power' and 'favors freedom' creates an oxymoron. That this balance favours freedom, would suggest



imbalance and a forward-leaning approach to foreign policy; not equilibrium. This rules out the most typical manner in which a 'balance of power' is traditionally used by Realists in International Relations theory. That is to say that it is not being used in a classical Realist sense, where states consciously adjust their alliances to ensure that no single state dominates the international system. Rather, as Christian Reus-Smit points out, the phrasing suggests primacy as 'it is sustained American ascendancy that will favour human freedom' (2004: 35).

Once understood in this context, it is clear that the Bush administration from the moment it took office sought to maintain US supremacy in what Charles Krauthammer termed the 'unipolar moment'. This was deemed to be in both the American national interest and the interest of the world; or more boldly expressed, what was good for America was good for the world. Such a US-centric approach was certainly advocated by candidate Bush. What clearer expression of this could be made than Bush's response to the question 'Have you formed any guiding principles for exercising this enormous power?':

I have, I have. First question is *what's in the best interests of the United States? What's in the best interests of our people?* When it comes to foreign policy that will be my guiding question (Bush 2000\_10\_11).

In part this US-centric position reflected the Bush campaign's perceived need to reassert American interests that were regarded as neglected in the Clinton era (Bush 2001: 239-41; Dunn 2003: 286). This was captured in the repetitious Bush campaign watchwords 'we will renew America's purpose' (Bush 1999\_09\_23, 2000\_08\_15). As candidate Bush narrated the past he described an American foreign and security policy drifting in the post-Cold War world, failing to develop an overarching rationale to seize and utilise American supremacy. This position also reflected appeals to the Reaganesque premise of 'peace through strength'. Such sentiments were expressed in claims that the US military should be used to 'fight and win war and therefore prevent war from happening in the

first place' and 'I know that the best defense can be a strong and swift offense' (Bush 2000\_10\_03, 1999\_09\_23). Yet instructively, because such statements were being articulated through the prism of primacy inspired by hegemonic stability theory, it is possible to conclude that throughout the 2000 campaign, and taken into office, was a desire to ensure that America would maintain freedom of action and preserve its position of preponderance (see Rice 2000).

Such a position infers a noteworthy definition of 'power'. In particular, 'power' was described as something quantifiable and derived from the possession of military and economic superiority. This wrote out conceptions of 'social power', or rather deontic powers, such as rights, duties, obligations, commitments, authorisations, requirements, permissions and privileges (see Searle 2007: 93; Reus-Smit 2004: 45-50). Such factors were dismissed as a product of 'discomfort', 'reflexive appeals' or of 'second-order' importance, rather than being seen as possessing intrinsic value for the pursuit of foreign policy goals. This position underpinned the unilateral emphasis that would accompany the Bush administration into office; manifesting itself in policies towards the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the International Criminal Court, global climate change, distrust of the United Nations, North Korea and Iran (see Buzan 2004: 166-70). This was, in a term coined by Richard N. Haass, 'à la carte multilateralism'. The term reflects the 'unilateral bias' and 'ideological leanings' of the Bush administration that was 'too quick to dismiss the benefits of multilateralism and legal frameworks and too quick to go it alone' (Haass 2009: 182-3). In essence, the Bush administration put forward a narrow definition of power, which made military and economic factors their main preoccupation. This was done in the expectation that this form of power would maintain US preponderance, because 'America's pursuit of the national interest' was expected to deliver global conditions for 'freedom, markets and peace'.

Notably, this narrow quantifiable theory of power was not the only conception of power put forward throughout the Bush campaign. Many accounts of this campaign have written out the extent to which the Bush team put forward a conception of power that was directly related to the triumphant exhilarance of the post-Cold War era. In particular the Bush campaign articulated a conception of ‘freedom’ with ‘power’:

Now, *we trust freedom. We know freedom is a powerful, powerful, powerful force*, much bigger than the United States of America (Bush 2000\_10\_11).

This conception of ‘power’ is clearly not the same as that of military or economic power. Rather, power here is seen to be a property of ‘freedom’, which was described as having an ontological status in the ‘human spirit’:

Military power is not the final measure of might. Our realism must make a place for the *human spirit*. This spirit, in our time, has caused dictators to fear and empires to fall ... *The most powerful force in the world is not a weapon or a nation but a truth: that we are spiritual beings, and that freedom is "the soul's right to breathe"* (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

In part, the Bush campaign represented its ontology of Being through allusions to Fukuyama’s teleological argument. This was done by claiming that the US was on the ‘right side of history’ (Bush 1999\_11\_19; Rice 2000), and pointing at the empirical consequences of democratic ‘waves’ throughout the twentieth century:

In the dark days of 1941 – the low point of our modern epic – there were about a dozen democracies left on the planet. Entering a new century, there are nearly 120. *There is a direction in events, a current in our times*. "Depend on it," said Edmund Burke. "The lovers of freedom will be free." ... We believe, with George Washington, that *"Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth."* (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

Such claims were more widely and directly declared once the Bush administration was in office:

Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. *Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations*. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the *inborn hope of our humanity*, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along (Bush 2001\_01\_20).

There is a *current in history* and it *runs toward freedom* (Bush 2001\_11\_10).

Yet, in addition to this teleological argument, the ‘power of freedom’ in the ‘human *spirit*’ was also given a theological tone; freedom was the ‘*soul*’s right to breathe’, and American was on ‘the right side of history – the side of man’s dignity and *God’s justice*’ (Bush 1999\_11\_19). As this shows, ‘freedom’s power’ was an articulation of both the teleological and the transcendental.

Unsurprisingly, candidate Bush and his team were vague when it came to explaining exactly what was meant by the term ‘freedom’. They certainly did not write a treatise on the subject or engage in any public philosophical rumination. It was simply asserted that ‘the basic principles of human freedom and dignity are universal’ (Bush 1999\_11\_19). To the extent that these ‘universal’ values were elucidated, it was simply asserted that:

People should be able to *say what they think. Worship as they wish. Elect those who govern them.* These ideals have proven their power on every continent ... We value the elegant structures of our own democracy – but realise that, in other societies, the *architecture will vary.* We *propose our principles, we must not impose our culture* (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

The tone of this statement is certainly modest, and appears to be respectful of cultural plurality albeit bound by some form of democratic legitimacy. Yet, further to this, the Bush campaign did make some remarkably telling statements concerning their guiding definition of ‘freedom’ and how it would be promoted. Once again candidate Bush appealed to the legacy of Ronald Reagan, and in particular the notion that the free market was a necessary foundation for individual freedom:

America believes in *free markets and free trade* – and benefits most when markets are opened ... We believe, with Alexander Hamilton, that the "spirit of commerce" has a tendency to "*soften the manners of men.*" ... I view free trade as an important ally in what Ronald Reagan called "*a forward strategy for freedom.*" The case for trade is *not just monetary, but moral. Economic freedom creates habits of liberty. And habits of liberty create expectations of democracy.* There are no guarantees, but there are good examples, from Chile to Taiwan. *Trade freely with China, and time is on our side* (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

What is particularly striking about this passage, and many other statements made throughout the campaign, is that candidate Bush was espousing a dedication to modernisation thesis. This put forward a particular understanding of how liberalisation and democratisation are linked to political economy. The benefits of free trade were portrayed as a method of reducing poverty and unemployment, and fundamentally as a method of linking economic and political liberalisation. This is a theory of political change, which posits modernisation as a functionalist and economistic outcome of capitalism. Moreover, modernity is seen as a single universal model in which democratisation is achieved through pursuing economic growth that results from integration into the global market (Grugel 2002: 47-48; Lockman 2004: 133-140). Thus,

the idea is that free-market reforms can act as tools for democratisation, because economic liberalisation, and the economic growth it generates, will build an independent middle class that will demand secure property rights, due process of law, and eventually political rights and freedoms from their governments (Wittes and Yerkes 2006b: 6).

This is certainly what Bush meant by the phrase '*soften the manners of men*' and assertion that '*habits of liberty create expectations of democracy*'. Within this schema economic freedom is paramount, and capitalism is seen as the heart of democracy because it produces wealth that is assumed will "trickle down" and lead to a higher level of mass consumption, and a well educated middle class that will demand cultural changes favourable to democracy. This was candidate Bush's '*vision of freedom ... nurtured by free markets*' (Bush 1999\_09\_23).

That candidate Bush was espousing modernisation thesis as a premise for his future administration's foreign policy should come as no surprise. US foreign policy has long drawn on this 'old thinking in academia' (Goldgeier 2008b). It was institutionalised into the US foreign policy bureaucracy when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was established. USAID drew on the ideas of Walt Whitman Rostow who

served as deputy national security assistant and national security adviser under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations respectively (Wiarda 1997: 16). As an economist Rostow's work had set out a teleological argument in *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto*, in which he asserted that societies go through five distinctive stages of economic growth and social change. Most notably he posited a 'takeoff into growth' stage that provided the link between turning traditional societies into high mass consumption societies characteristic of the West. When USAID was established it premised much of its development planning on Rostow's argument and focused on the 'takeoff into growth' stage (USAID 2005). By institutionalising the ideas of Rostow in USAID, US foreign and security policy has since embodied an explicit teleological link between economic growth and democratisation. Furthermore, modernisation thesis is now institutionalised in the growing democracy bureaucracy in the United States. As James Goldgeier explained, in a personal interview at the *Council on Foreign Relations*,

[I]n Washington the extent to which people think about it [democracy promotion], it is modernisation theory. The economic development comes first, and then you can have democracy. And the fact that that is hugely debated now within academia, I don't think it has penetrated ... I mean there is a lot of work in academia now that challenges that, but that debate isn't known in Washington. There is not a lot of thinking about that. And I think that if you compare the economists to the other, to the people doing democracy stuff, you know people serving at the treasury and working at the IMF, their economists, they know economic theory. They know what they think is necessary to build markets and they follow from that. People doing democracy promotion they are not political scientists, and they don't know the political science literature (Goldgeier 2008b).

Strikingly, the difference between candidate Bush's espoused modernisation thesis, and its Cold War anti-communist archetype, is that the Bush campaign had fused it with a staunch neoliberal philosophy (see Antonio and Bonannolt 2006). This is unsurprising given that candidate Bush wanted to emulate and expand the 'Reagan revolution'. The term 'neoliberalism' clearly requires explaining as it is an allusive term, which is often conflated with globalisation. Although related, the two terms are not equivocal. Notably,

neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices that places a heavy emphasis on an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. For neoliberals, such an institutional framework is seen as the best method of securing human well-being as it liberates individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills. Within such a schema, the role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate for strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. As a result, the state has the duty of securing the quality and integrity of money and setting up military, defense, police and legal structures required to secure private property rights. The ultimate purpose of the state is therefore to secure the proper functioning of markets; by force if necessary. Moreover, as David Harvey exemplifies,

[I]f markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, healthcare, social security or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. Beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory [neoliberalism], the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit ... It holds that social good will be maximised by maximising the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market (2005: 2-3).

The importance of neoliberalism is that the philosophy is accompanied by a particular understanding of freedom. This philosophy is inspired by Friedrich A. Hayek and Milton Friedman's 'Chicago Boys' and their notion that all forms of state intervention undermine individual freedom by removing an individual's right to choose. This is not just in monarchies, dictatorships, and oligarchies, but also in 'momentary majorities' (Friedman 1962 [2002]: 15). Consequently the philosophy embodies antistatism as an approach to political and economic affairs, in favour of allowing markets to rule. As Friedman argued, 'the private sector is a check on the powers of the governmental sector and an effective protection of freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought' (1962 [2002]: 3). Freedom is understood as decentralised political power,

limited government and a free market economy because,

[C]ompetitive capitalism ... [is] a system of economic freedom and a necessary condition for political freedom ... economic freedom, in and of itself, is an extremely important part of total freedom ... the kind of economic organisation that provides economic freedom directly, namely competitive capitalism, also promotes political freedom because it separates economic power from political power and in this way enables the one to offset the other (1962 [2002]: 3;8;9).

As Eric Foner points out, 'what set these "libertarian" conservatives apart from other social critics ... was their equation of individual freedom with unregulated capitalism' (1998: 309). More fundamentally they turned the philosophy of nineteenth century 'Radicals' such as Jeremy Bentham on its head; no longer was it political freedom that delivered economic freedom, but 'economic freedom as a means to political freedom' (Friedman 1962 [2002]: 10-12). In this attempt to capture what Hayek called 'the almost indispensable term' from 'the left', freedom was now defined in individualistic and economic terms, with political freedom being described as 'the absence of coercion of a man by his fellow men [sic]' (Friedman 1962 [2002]: 15). When Ronald Reagan brought this definition of freedom into the presidential office, succeeding where Barry Goldwater failed in the 1964 campaign, he shifted the "official" discourse of freedom. Freedom was no longer articulated through the vernacular of civil rights, free expression and equal opportunity but rather tax cuts, deregulation and military superiority. Special interests were not the economic elites of big business corporations and finance, but those in favour of state ran social welfare programmes, unions and environmental groups. Democracy was no longer the realm of public goods and citizens, but the domain of entrepreneurial-market-consumers and a dedication to private property (Antonio and Bonannolt 2006: 11; Foner 1998: 307-32). This was a radical shift in the manner in which freedom had been conceived though various stages of US history, but it was a definition that G. W. Bush keenly appropriated into his ideological-discursive formation.



This definition of freedom was embedded in candidate Bush's appeals to 'compassionate conservatism', and proclamations that 'big government is not the answer'. The solution proposed to social problems was 'helping the helper' because 'Government cannot do this work' (Bush 2000\_08\_15). Inconsistently, this individualistic definition of freedom was not applied to all areas of the private and/or social, as it lies in tension with transcendental Christian values, which President Bush clearly subscribed to and sought to institutionalise in both domestic and foreign policy<sup>96</sup> (Mansfield 2003). Whilst Friedman believed that 'a major aim of the [neo] liberal is to leave the ethical problem for the individual to wrestle with' (1962 [2002]: 12), Bush's compassionate conservatism tried to balance the spiritual with the material, informing citizens of what constitutes a moral life on issues such as abortion. This is an inconsistency shared by the Christian Right, but overlooked by individuals such as Jerry Falwell who has previously proclaimed 'the word of God in both Old and New Testaments' justifies 'capitalism and free enterprise' (in Foner 1998: 317). That Bush had a dedication to neoliberalism is however unquestionable. Bush himself attributes it to a trip to China he undertook in 1975,

I'll never forget the contrast between what I learned about the free market at Harvard and what I saw in the isolation of China. Every bicycle looked the same. People's clothes were all the same - drab and indistinguishable. Central planners restricted choices; a free market frees individuals to make distinct choices and independent decisions. The market gives individuals the opportunity to demand and decide, and entrepreneurs the opportunity to provide. It was clear that China's restrictions of markets limited individuality and competition ... My visit underscored my belief in the power and promise of the marketplace, and deepened my belief that by introducing capitalism and the market place, China will free her people to dream and risk (Bush 2001: 61).

The lessons Bush learnt at Harvard Business School, or what he termed '*the West Point of capitalism*', were not just limited to the benefits that capitalism could bestow to others. Free trade, he alleged, would also benefit the United States:

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<sup>96</sup> On the President's first day in office, he not only called for a national day of prayer, but also cut federal spending on abortion. Bush's White House was also renowned for its Bible study and prayer meetings (see Mansfield 2003).

I believe the best way to help American oilmen and farmers and producers and entrepreneurs is to open new markets by tearing down barriers, everywhere, so the whole world *trades in freedom* (2001: 66).

The phrase ‘trades in freedom’ is a particularly suggestive double entendre. One interpretation suggests that the world trades without restraint, yet, a second meaning is clearly neoliberal in its suggestion that freedom is being exchanged like a currency through trading. Bush deployed this double meaning consistently arguing that it was in fact a president’s duty to ‘promote a fully democratic Western Hemisphere, bound together by free trade... [and] lead toward a world that *trades in freedom*’ (Bush 1999\_11\_19), and that,

The cause of freedom rests on more than our ability to defend ourselves and our allies. *Freedom is exported* every day, as we ship goods and products that improve the lives of millions of people. *Free trade brings greater political and personal freedom* (Bush 2001\_02\_27).

By articulating ‘freedom’ as both a transcendental value and ontological property of Being, the Bush campaign referred to freedom as a noun; as the name of an object that can be transplanted through free trade mechanisms. This often led to freedom being equivocated with free trade. In essence, this led to the essentially contested concept becoming a nominalisation, which undermined the adjectival quality of ‘freedom’ and obfuscated a process into a noun. In turn, this marginalised social and agential qualities. Freedom was simply a set of ‘universal values’, predominantly defined and delivered by free trade. The adoption of which, it was argued, would not only produce global prosperity but also ‘extend peace’ and security:

Our world, shaped by American courage, power and wisdom, now echoes with American ideals. We won a victory, not just for a nation, but for a vision. A *vision of freedom* and individual dignity – defended by democracy, *nurtured by free markets*, spread by information technology, *carried to the world by free trade*. *The advance of freedom* – from Asia to Latin America to East and Central Europe – *is creating the conditions for peace* ... Building a *durable peace* will require strong alliances, *expanding trade* and confident diplomacy (Bush 1999\_09\_23).

By understanding free trade as the engine of modernisation, the Bush campaign put

forward a utopian vision of an interdependent, prosperous, secure and peacefully organised world, which it would encourage from a 'position of strength' (Bush 1999\_11\_19). This vision also propagated a mode of democracy promotion, albeit understood as the product of free trade. This challenges the notion that the Bush administration came into office without a 'democracy promotion agenda' per se. Rather, a closer inspection of the espoused ideological-discursive formation, underpinning the campaign's narrative, reveals a desire to promote democracy vis-à-vis modernisation through free trade.

### **An Important Election?**

The 2000 presidential campaign, between Al Gore and George W. Bush, was largely unexceptional, up until the votes had been cast and the Supreme Court intervened to make George W. Bush the forty-third President of the United States. Candidate Bush's national security goals were far from transformational and demonstrated a limited global agenda. This was much more closely aligned with congressional Republicans than neoconservatives, which was why many neoconservatives backed Arizona Senator John McCain and his more ambitious ideas in the Republican primaries (Chollet and Goldgeier 2008: 295). Yet, the 2000 campaign is important because it laid the foundations for a distinctive ideological-discursive formation. It combined primacy with hegemonic stability theory as a philosophy for preventing American decline and securing global peace. It also characterised America as a 'benign hegemon' that would use military force prudently and decisively in pursuit of more limited national interests.

The importance of this ideological-discursive formation is that it provided definitions, and set out a distinctive understanding, of concepts such as 'freedom', 'democracy', 'peace' and 'security'. This was not done explicitly, but rather these definitions were

embedded within the narrative put forward by the Bush campaign. It is fundamental to draw attention to these definitions because they would later be relied upon in the construction of the Freedom Agenda and its institutionalisation. As Henry Kissinger once argued,

It is not possible to conduct foreign policy without a vision of the world that one wants to bring about, some definition of what one means by peace, and by justice and by order and by stability and by progress (in Amstutz 2001: 177).

Moreover, it is clear from the analysis above that democratisation was very much part of the vision constructed by candidate Bush. This was not yet being articulated through the prism of US-MENA relations, but rather presented as a general philosophy that would restore ‘American purpose’, through a ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’. To this extent ‘it is important to note that although primacy focuses on the maintenance of overwhelming U.S. power and influence, it remains strongly committed to liberal principles’ (Posen and Ross 1996-7: 34). This was evident in the ideological-discursive formation, in which a neoliberal modernisation thesis was envisioned as the means of achieving a utopian organisation of democratic, prosperous, peaceful, secure interdependent states. Accordingly, as John Gerard Ruggie notes,

[A]ll hegemonies are not alike. The most that can be said about hegemonic power is that it will seek to construct an international order in *some* form, presumably along the lines that are compatible with its own international objectives and domestic structures (1993: 25).

That this was the case, was certainly suggested by the use of the term ‘a balance of power that favors freedom’, and consistent reference to both transcendental and material factors delivering all the international system to the ‘right side of history’. Undoubtedly, this ideological-discursive formation would come to bear a guiding influence once the new administration was in office, and after the September 11, 2001 “crisis”, gradually become embedded in US-MENA relations and evolve into the Freedom Agenda. It is to elucidating the stages of this evolution that this research must now turn.

## **8. Narrating 9/11; the Form and Content of Political Change**

With the accession to the Presidency, it became highly apparent that G. W. Bush's initial approach to foreign policy lacked any grand vision. Whilst the shift in Washington's elites in early 2001 had the impact of modifying the operational definition of the national interest, the new administration did not view the strategically selective context as radically different from the Clinton administration. Throughout the campaign they had put forward a highly distinguishable ideological-discursive formation, but within the first eight months the Bush foreign policy was discernible only by a modification of settings and instruments. There was no large paradigm shift, and it became increasingly evident that the new President found himself charting a course without the advantage of an overarching foreign policy rationale. Instead, domestic policy took precedence, with tax cuts at home being the mantra of the new administration. Even in areas that candidate Bush promised to place more emphasis on, these did not manifest themselves. Particularly noticeable was the fact that the Clinton administration had been derided for its supposed chronic under-funding of the military, yet when it came to defense spending the new President informed Congress that 'there will be no new money for defense this year'. In turn many in the military noted that 'it sounds like campaign promise No. 1 being broken' (Krugman 2001; Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 63).

The lack of an overarching rationale manifested itself in US-MENA relations. This is unsurprising given that, although deemed strategically important, US-MENA relations were not a key issue in the 2000 campaign. Moreover, it is not unusual for an incoming administration to take a few months to formulate its Middle East policy through the National Security Council (NSC) process. Thus, despite criticism of the Clinton administration, the Bush administration was largely abiding by long established policies

towards the region, with the national security goals of securing Israel and the free flow of Middle Eastern oil (see chapter two). This lack of focus on the region was symbolised by the administration taking three months to appoint a senior director for Middle Eastern affairs to the NSC staff (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 66). To the extent that there was an alteration in US-MENA policy within the first eight months, it came in the form of disengaging from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and asserting the need to focus on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

On January 30, 2001, ten days after being inaugurated, President Bush called his first meeting of the NSC. The overriding focus of the meeting was on Middle East policy. It was at this meeting that the President declared to all the principals of his NSC staff that his administration was going to abandon Clinton's efforts at peace talks in the region. According to Ron Suskind's account of this meeting, provided by former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil, the President asserted that,

we're going to correct the imbalances of the previous administration on the Mideast conflict. We're going to tilt back towards Israel ... Clinton overreached, and it all fell apart. That's why we're in trouble ... If the two sides don't want peace, there's no way we can force them ... I think it's time to pull out of the situation ... Sometimes a show of strength by one side [Israel] can really clarify things (2004: 71-2).

Effectively, this meant disengaging from the peace process, whilst violence in the region was increasing. The second Intifada began on September 28, 2000. This was not just between Israeli soldiers and stone-throwing Palestinian youths, but also involved Fatah's paramilitary Tanzim fighters and sections of the Palestinian Authority police force. The violence was later exacerbated by Ariel Sharon being elected Israeli Prime Minister in February 2001. Yet, far from an even-handed disengagement, it was clear that the Bush administration was adopting a hard-line stance against the Palestinian leader Yasir

Arafat<sup>97</sup> (Frontières 2003: 7-8). This led to the administration respecting Israeli policy and in effect allowing Israel to shape US policy towards the conflict (see Pressman 2003). Whilst the new National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, was arguing that 'we shouldn't think of American involvement for the sake of American involvement' (in Usborne 2001), President Bush was asserting that,

[Israel is] a small country that has lived under the threat throughout its existence. At my first meeting of my National Security Council, I told them that a top foreign policy priority of my administration is the safety and security of Israel. My administration will be steadfast in supporting Israel against terrorism and violence, and in seeking the peace for which all Israelis pray (Bush 2001\_05\_03).

The Bush strategy towards the conflict clearly placed Israeli security concerns first, with an emphasis on containing the conflict rather than goading both parties towards a resolution<sup>98</sup>. This was certainly evident at the United Nations Security Council, where the Bush administration continued the historical trend of stymieing any attempts at condemning Israeli policy. In March 2001, the United States threatened to veto any resolution that denoted Israeli occupation forces surrounding and shelling Palestinian towns as a 'siege', or referred to the Geneva Conventions, international law, the principle of land-for-peace, or Israeli settlements as 'illegal' (Zunes 2003: 116).

Yet, whilst the Bush administration was making the case to lower the priority of resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it was prioritising a harder approach on Iraq. As

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<sup>97</sup> This followed advice given by President Clinton, in which he told President-elect Bush not to misjudge Arafat in the same way he had during his own attempts in the Peace Process (Rubin and Rubin 2003: 213).

<sup>98</sup> This reflected the Bush campaign's declared approach of being selective over diplomatic engagements. Indeed, in late January 2001, the Bush administration had declined to send an envoy for final attempts at peace talks in Egypt, and later decided to abolish the post of a special envoy to the Middle East. Moreover, when Senator George Mitchell reported back with his report on the causes of the second Intifada in April 2001, his three-step peace plan was endorsed by the administration but given little political support. By June 2001, escalating violence in the region did lead the administration to make a slight reversal on the decision to disengage, leading to the President dispatching the CIA director George Tenet to act as a special envoy to negotiate a cease-fire. However, like the Mitchell Plan it was endorsed but given little political support by the higher echelons of the administration (Quandt 2005: 385-96; Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 66).

Scott McClellan, the former White House Press Secretary, has argued,

[E]ven at the outset, Iraq was looming in the background. The very first Monday [January 22, 2001], the *New York Times* ... ran a front-page story about Iraq rebuilding factories “that the United States has long suspected of producing chemical and biological weapons” ... The *Times* called it an early test of Bush’s pledge to “take a tougher stance against” Saddam Hussein than his immediate predecessor had .... Iraq would continue to be a top issue of the administration’s focus and media interest in months to come. The National Security Council made Iraq an early priority of the policy formulation process. As for that first day, with no new policy yet firmly in place, we simply told the press that the president expected Saddam Hussein to live up to his agreement with the United Nations that his regime not produce weapons of mass destruction (2008: 89).

From Paul O’Neil’s account of the January 30, 2001 NSC meeting, it is clear that the President, and key advisers such as Rice, Tenet and Cheney, viewed Iraq as a destabilising force in the region, and that ‘ten days in ... it was about Iraq ... Getting Hussein was now the administration’s focus’ (Suskind 2004: 70-76).

This is not to suggest that a plan to attack Iraq was established. Despite some members of the new administration, such as Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney, advocating regime change before coming into office, once in office these calls were muted as no consensus emerged concerning an overthrow strategy. This was reflected in Paul Wolfowitz’s confirmation hearing when he argued that overthrowing Saddam Hussein ‘I think would be worthwhile’, but conditioned this with the claim that he had not seen a ‘plausible plan’ for changing the regime (in Katzman 2003: 7). Instead, Iraq policy was largely ran by Colin Powell’s State Department, and the ‘new purpose’ promised throughout the 2000 campaign manifest itself in a commitment to ‘smart sanctions’, which attempted to alter the conditions of the UN led oil-for-food programme. Clinton’s Iraq policy was seen as a failure and Saddam Hussein as ‘a danger’, but Bush argued that it was necessary to rebuild the ‘coalition to keep the pressure on him [Saddam Hussein]’, and ‘absolutely not’ abandon sanctions, but make them ‘tougher’ (Bush 2000\_10\_11).



This was not an administration determined on military induced regime change, but rather an administration that had no overarching rationale and no plan in place to deal with Iraq. There were certainly a few senior individuals that wanted to overthrow Saddam Hussein within the state apparatus, in particular Paul Wolfowitz, but such individuals were marginalised by Colin Powell's State Department. Before September 11, 2001 Powell was claiming that,

I think it is important to point out that for the last 10 years, the policy of the United Nations, the United States has been following, has succeeded in keeping Iraq from rebuilding to the level that it was before ... So to some extent, I think we ought to declare this a success. *We have kept him contained, kept him in his box* (Powell 2001\_02\_23).

Without a consensus on US-Iraq policy in place, ultimately the Bush administration was drifting whilst trying to appear 'tougher' with Iraq. The prevailing narrative put forward by the President was that 'our coalition against Saddam is unravelling. Sanctions are loosened. The man ... may be developing weapons of mass destruction, we don't know because inspectors aren't in' (Bush 2000\_10\_17). The 'smart sanctions' policy was an "amend it, don't end it" policy, which focused on military goods, but was relaxed on trade more generally. In office, the Bush administration pursued many elements of the Clinton administration's policy, favouring sanctions in conjunction with the 1998 *Iraq Liberation Act*, which had the stated goal of removing the Saddam regime by funding Iraqi exile groups. However, even this was not taken to the extreme, evident in the Treasury Department's *Office of Foreign Assets Control* granting Ahmed Chalabi's *Iraqi National Congress* (INC) a licence for information gathering but withholding backing for the group's plan to rebuild its presence in Iraq (Katzman 2003: 8).

The most significant attempt to look more decisive against Iraq occurred on February 16, 2001, when, without the usual build-up and brinkmanship, the US bombed close to the

Iraqi capital sending Saddam ‘a clear message’ of the new administration’s willingness to use force (Asser 2001; Teimourian 2001). However, rather than the bombings themselves being seen as a deviation from US policy, the prevailing message put forward by the Bush administration, was concern over Chinese workers helping the Iraqi military install a fibre optic communication network in the Iraqi air defense system (Ricks 2006: 26-7). The attacks were as significant a message to Chinese encroachment into the Middle East, as they were towards the Iraqi regime. Moreover, the attacks marked an escalation in the willingness to use military power more readily as a method of deterrence, but ultimately the instruments and indeed the broad goals of US-Iraqi policy remained unaltered. Evidently, the Bush administration had neither a grand strategy for Iraq, in particular, nor the MENA more broadly. Maintaining regional stability remained the overarching rationale, and there was a conspicuous silence concerning both freedom and democracy in the region.

To the extent that there was a noteworthy shift from past policy it was not immediately obvious. The new administration’s policies towards Israel and Iraq were not substantive in-and-of-themselves, if taken in isolation. Rather, what the first NSC meeting demonstrated was an effort to pursue a ‘de-coupling’ strategy. Throughout the 1990s, the Clinton administration held the view that events in the Eastern Mediterranean impacted on the Gulf. Consequently, to secure Israeli security and the flow of oil from the region was seen to require active engagement in the peace process. However, the Bush administration reprioritised its Middle East focus, seeing peace as desirable but not vital to securing long term security interests. That is to say that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was perceived as less destabilising towards the region than had been considered by American administrations over the previous three decades. Iraq however was seen as the greatest threat to US national interests because of its ‘destabilising’ effect throughout the

region. As a logical corollary, the two issues were de-coupled as one was seen as important and the other not (Mohamedi and Sadowski 2001: 14). The importance of the new administration's stance towards Israel and Iraq is that it isolated them from each other, which set the backdrop of the Bush administration's policy towards the Middle East before September 11, 2001. Whilst this was a significant modification in how previous administrations had viewed regional politics and configured US strategy, this was certainly not a paradigm shift in US-MENA relations; continuity was largely the watchword of this pre-September 11, 2001 period. Yet this radically changed on September 11, 2001. The day's events provided a moment of punctuation in political time leading to the strategic construction of a war on terror, which cumulatively evolved into the Freedom Agenda as a transformative liberal grand strategy for the MENA. It is to explicating the first stage of this evolution that this diachronic research must now turn, and, as the constructivist institutionalist methodology elucidated, there is no better place to start than with the events of September 11 2001 themselves and the manner in which the Bush administration constructed a narrative of this crisis.

### **The Moment of Punctuation: Stabilising Uncertainty and Securing Author-ity**

The events of September 11, 2001 are widely known and well documented:

- At 8:46 EST. American Airline Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City.
- At 9:03 EST. United Airlines Flight 175 struck the South Tower of the World Trade Center.
- At 9:37 EST. American Airline Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon building.
- At 10:02 United Airlines Flight 93 crashed into an empty field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania (NCTAUS 2004: 1-14).

Many narratives have been constructed that order these events and their aftermath. These have included personal, official and fictional narratives. There have been highly detailed “official” accounts, such as the *9/11 Commission Report*; autobiographical accounts such as those collected for the Library of Congress’ American Folklife Center’s *September 11 2001 Documentary Project*; bibliographical accounts such as Bob Woodward’s *Bush at War*; semi-fictional novels such as F. P. Lionel’s *Clear Blue Sky*; Hollywood blockbusters such as *World Trade Center* and *United 93*; and graphic novels such as *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* and *9/11: Artists Respond*. This list is by no means exhaustive, but demonstrates how events of that day have been near endlessly reproduced in many genres and for many different audiences.

It is tempting to think of these events as merely “reflecting” reality; to argue that the events “speak for themselves”. Indeed this is a temperament aided by the ubiquitous representations of the events. At the ontologically-objective level, the “facts” are not contentious; aircraft had been used as kinetic weapons, which crashed into prominent buildings, which were either totally or partially destroyed. Yet, the *meaning* of these events is not easy to determine. Rather *meaning*, and therefore *interpretation* of the events, exists at an ontologically-subjective level; they are human constructions. What the events signified is a hermeneutical question, which once answered exists at an observer-dependent level. This is a level that exists in and through language; a result of establishing post hoc “readings” of the events through the deployment of words. Once understood in this manner, the ontologically-objective events can be considered as constituting part of the *fabula* of any narrative; as the ‘material or content’ that is worked into a narrative (see Bal 1997; Fairclough 2003: 83-6). In the case of historical narratives, this represents ‘referential intention’ (Fairclough 2003: 85; Callinicos 1995).

Yet, to appropriate this fabula into a narrative requires what Paul Ricoeur has termed an

act of ‘productive invention’. These events must be ordered by and within the human imagination. Within a narrative, *plot* serves this function, as it is the plot that,

“grasps together” and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematising the intelligible signification attached to the narrative as a whole (Ricoeur 1984: x).

Given that the plot within a narrative has an overarching role, it is necessary to ask, what was the plot presented by the Bush administration in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001?

Through conducting a *process-tracing textually oriented narrative analysis*, the answer to this question, simply put, was that in the aftermath of the September 11 2001 attacks the initially constructed plot was one of “*tragedy*”. Within hours of the attacks occurring President Bush and members of his administration began framing the events in this way:

Today we've had a national *tragedy*. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country (Bush 2001\_09\_11a).

Today America has experienced one of the greatest *tragedies* ever witnessed on our soil (Ashcroft 2001\_09\_11).

The President's focus right now is on helping those who have lost their -- the families of those who have lost their lives and those who are suffering in this *tragedy*; and then on taking whatever the appropriate next steps should be (Fleischer 2001\_09\_12).

We are gathered here because of what happened here on September 11th. Events that bring to mind *tragedy* (Rumsfeld 2001\_10\_11).

To construct the plot as a tragedy is significant. Notably because it provided the first steps in filling what some analysts have termed a ‘void of meaning’ (see Jackson 2005: 29; Der Derian 2002: 107). The sheer visceral horror of the events created an aporia; the events marked a breach in the expected state of things, generating uncertainty as the peripeteia awoke the audience. Thus, it was out of this chaos, a sense of order under attack, vulnerability and surprise that the events were constructed as a tragedy, which transformed the ‘inexpressible’ into the ‘expressible’ in an attempt to stabilise the

uncertainty created. As Pierre Macherey points out, the function of the tragic is to reduce elusive silence into regulated knowledge; it is the ‘art of overcoming unmeaning’ (1978: 6).

To refer to the events as a ‘tragedy’, however, have larger implications that are directly related to further stabilising the uncertainty condition that emerged out of this moment of punctuation. It provided the initial understanding of the events, whilst inviting a set of instructional rules. At a basic level, it could be argued that the events were to be understood as tragic at the level of human emotions; as “distressing”, or a signification of “suffering”. As Terry Eagleton points out, ‘in everyday language, the word ‘tragedy’ means something like ‘very sad’ (2003: 1). This, as President Bush made clear, was certainly articulated as part of its meaning:

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with *disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger* (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

We are here in the middle hour of our *grief*. So many have *suffered* so great a *loss*, and today we express our nation’s *sorrow* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

In addition to this, the Bush administration made it very clear ‘who’ was supposed to feel these emotions. This was a ‘*national tragedy*’ in which ‘*we*’, meaning ‘Americans’, were to undergo these emotions<sup>99</sup>. This is a significant discursive move as it constructed a focalisation from the local to national. This act of interpellation was directly intended to allow the audience to identify with the events, therefore goading participation within the tragedy itself. Members of the audience were not merely spectators, but rather directly invited to be involved within the tragedy. This represented what Friedrich Nietzsche referred to as the Dionysian aspect of a tragedy, in which interaction helps ‘forget the

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<sup>99</sup> It is particularly noteworthy to add that the Bush administration also consistently made reference to ‘civilisation’ as under attack therefore expanding the ‘we’. For an excellent analysis of this discourse see Richard Jackson (2005) *Writing the War on Terrorism*.

self” and experience a more mystical communal union. This unifying experience is thus intended to provide an intoxicating and therapeutic outlet through the response (Nietzsche 2008 [1886]: 119-38). As Stuart Croft has demonstrated, symbols of unity emerged after September 11, 2001 and extended throughout the cultural landscape, which included ‘books, popular music, television, educational materials, collectables, and that most potent cultural symbol, the tattoo’ (2006: 93).

This emotional aspect of the tragedy plot, once framed as a *national tragedy*, allowed a more political dimension to be secured (see Falk 2002: 130). National unity and patriotism<sup>100</sup> had become the order of the day, with members of the Bush administration arguing that,

[N]ow is the time for us to *come together as a nation* to offer our support, our prayers for the victims and for their families, for the rescue workers, for law enforcement officials, for every one of us that has been changed forever by this horrible *tragedy* (Ashcroft 2001\_09\_11).

Americans showed a deep commitment to one another, and an *abiding love for our country* ... we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called the warm courage of *national unity* ... It has *joined together* political parties in both houses of Congress ... *Our unity is a kinship of grief* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

This mix of emotion, uncertainty, tragedy, unity, and patriotism allowed the Bush administration to establish a series of regulative rules. This began with the President asserting that,

Americans are asking: What is expected of us? *I ask you to live your lives and hug your children* ... I ask you to *be calm and resolute* ... *I ask you to uphold the values of America* ... We are in a fight for our principles, and our *first responsibility is to live by them* ... The thousands of *FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it* ... I ask your *continued participation and confidence in the American economy* (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

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<sup>100</sup> A clear indicator of this level of national unity and patriotism was the extent to which American flag sales increased rapidly; from September 11 to September 13, 2001 Wal-Mart alone sold 450,000 and Kmart sold another 200,000 (Andrews 2007: 103).

Of particular interest about these instructional rules is the manner in which, in the name of patriotism, they encourage submission to the state at this tragic time. By October 2001, the Bush administration had been able to pass a sweeping piece of legislation called the *USA PATRIOT Act*. This acronym reveals the temperament of the time. Public Law Pub.L. 107-56 articulated the desire of *Uniting and Strengthening America*, under the banner of *patriotism*. This established a direct challenge to civil liberties under the banner of *unity* and *patriotism*, whilst allowing the demarcation of binaries such as patriot/unpatriotic, American/unAmerican and ‘with us or against us’ (see Andrews 2007: 99-107).

Moreover, the rules put forward by the Bush administration were not controversial in and of themselves, but when articulated through the prism of patriotism worked to ‘depoliticise’ the events and establish non-critical practises. For example, the first instructional rule ‘*live your lives and hug your children*’ appears to be benign. Yet, as Maja Zehfuss argues,

What might at first have appeared to be an alternative approach to dealing with the experience of an inevitable insecurity, turned out in fact to be a deeply patronising comment, the ultimate closure of debate. Concentrate on your families. Do not concern yourselves with the difficult business of politics. The state will provide security (2003: 525).

The second set of instructional rules, concerning ‘*uphold the values*’ and ‘*live by them*’, are, upon reflection, equally problematic. Such rules encouraged the unconditional celebration of American life, values and institutions in a benignant manner; rather than encouraging inquiry into the anti-American grievances so prevalent in the Arab world (Falk 2003: 131). Furthermore, the third notion of what Americans should do is troubling, as it was suggested that American’s patriotic duty was now to spend and invest (see Lowenstein 2001: 20). This notion was an anathema to the temperament of the time as ‘the events of September 11 had renewed nonmaterial values’ (Silberstein 2002: 124).



Yet, this conflation of consumerism and patriotism sent a simple message; focus your attention on spending, not politics.

What was evident from these instructional rules was that they were not coupled with notions of inquiry, critique and introspection. These aspects were not part of the presented rule structure. It is tempting to postulate that perhaps these notions were implied by reference to the amorphous rubric of 'American values'. However under the banner of unity and patriotism this was openly stymied. There was no attempt made by the Bush administration to compel the American public to evaluate for themselves why the events had happened. Indeed, if as Nicolas Onuf argues '*rules yield rule*' (1998: 74), a tangible reason for not compelling inquiry and critique was that this would threaten the interpellative effect of the narrative presented by the Bush administration. In turn, this would challenge the legitimacy of the narrative being presented and the political hierarchy it sought to maintain; the President and his administration therefore sought to stabilise their author-ity and remain the main storytellers. In effect, the events of September 11, 2001 had created a moment of punctuation in political time, which not only mobilised 'America' as an imagined community, but also provided the Bush administration manoeuvrable space to redirect policy by constructing and developing a strategic narrative.

### **From Tragedy to Moral play: Articulating God, Freedom and an Exceptional Nation**

Once the events of September 11, 2001 were constructed as a 'national tragedy', the Bush administration was able to build upon this plot and seamlessly construct a moral play. This is a significant dynamic that had far reaching consequences throughout the Bush administration's political tenure. In the immediate aftermath of September 11 2001, the Bush administration bestowed the events with metaphysical meaning:

Tonight, I ask for your *prayers* for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And *I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me."* (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

This discursive manoeuvre is significant because its intended purpose was to provide comfort in a time of grief. Once again the Dionysian aspect of a tragedy was evident, the implication was to forget the self and experience a more mystical communal union; albeit now the intoxicating and therapeutic outlet was endowed with religious meaning. Akin to Karl Marx's insight 'religion ... is the opium of the people', comfort was now to be found by the nation embracing God in a time of suffering:

*Scripture says: "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." ... We will persevere through this national tragedy and personal loss. In time, we will find healing and recovery; and, in the face of all this evil, we remain strong and united, "one Nation under God."* (Bush 2001\_09\_13).

*[T]he prayers of private suffering, whether in our homes or in this great cathedral, are known and heard, and understood ... This world He created is of moral design. Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance, and love have no end. And the Lord of life holds all who die, and all who mourn. It is said that adversity introduces us to ourselves. This is true of a nation as well* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

A Marine chaplain, in trying to explain why there could be *no human explanation for a tragedy such as this*, said once: "You would think it would *break the heart of God*." We stand today in the *midst of tragedy - the mystery of tragedy*. Yet a mystery that is part of that *larger awe and wonder that causes us to bow our heads in faith* and say of those we mourn, those we have lost, the words of scripture: "*Lord now let Thy servants go in peace, Thy word has been fulfilled*" (Rumsfeld 2001\_10\_11).

This was clearly an act of *dues ex machina*, as God was lowered into the narrative to provide meaning to the events. The catastrophe was presented as a 'reversal of fortune', and once tragedy was articulated with a theological discourse, meaning was conferred upon the dead and their 'eloquent acts of *sacrifice*'<sup>101</sup> (Bush 2001\_09\_14). With

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<sup>101</sup> The term sacrifice in modern day usage often refers to a form of transference; giving one thing for another. Yet the etymological roots of the term are from the Latin *sacrificus*; to perform priestly functions. This is derived from *sacra* - sacred rites, and *facere* - to perform.

speeches being delivered in symbolic terrain, such as the National Cathedral, the loss of life was given meaning through a Christian theological discourse. The loss of life was not constructed as part of the “absurdity”, “inexplicability” or “unpredictability” of Being, which would clearly have provided the basis of an alternative narrative. Morality and divine purpose were not portrayed as part of the human imagination, which is a readily available discourse from the works of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre or Camus<sup>102</sup>. The Bush administration had made a metaphysical move, appealing to theological ideas and the philosophy of Jerusalem. Not the philosophy of Athens steeped in Reason or a humanist philosophy.

This theological move could be seen as following “American tradition”. It is possible to argue that, given the circumstances presented by September 11, 2001, this theological appeal was the result of a “logic of appropriateness”. This is not meant as a culturally deterministic or structuralist argument. Due to the relationship between Dasein and temporality, what you inherit from your forefathers you must win again anew. However, the prominence of religiosity in the US makes a Christian theological discourse present itself as an attractive option for strategic agents working in a strategically selective context. Yet, what is significant about framing the tragedy in theological terms, is the manner in which it seamlessly allowed acts of ‘emplotment’ to become transcendental. ‘God’ was cast as an actor in what was transformed into a moral play:

*God's signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

Many have discovered again that *even in tragedy - especially in tragedy - God is near* (Bush 2002\_01\_29).

This act of emplotment is crucial to understanding the manner in which characters were

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<sup>102</sup> For a detailed analysis of such authors views of tragedy see Jennifer Wallace’s (2007) *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy*.

constructed within the narrative. Indeed, theological ideas are politically illuminating, and when articulated with identity politics have dramatic consequences. Once the premise is accepted that God is an ontological reality, then as a logical corollary it is possible to posit a world of *moral realism*. This is a world where there is a moral reality independent of moral beliefs; morality has an ontologically-objective status independent of Being. Through this prism, actions have moral properties, which are genuine properties that are simply part of the furniture of the world (see McNaughton 1988: 3-65; McDowell 1978; Mackie 1977). This premise is part of the ideological-discursive formation that President Bush brought with him into office. In reference to what Governor G. W. Bush termed the ‘American story’, he argued that this was,

[A] story in which *evil is real*, but courage and decency triumph ... America has determined enemies, who hate our values and resent our success – terrorists and crime syndicates and drug cartels and unbalanced dictators. The Empire has passed, but *evil remains* (Bush 1999\_11\_19).

Similarly, in President Bush’s speech to the United Nations General Assembly, following ‘9/11’, he argued that ‘we know that *evil is real*, but *good will prevail against it*. This is the teaching of many *faiths*, and in that assurance we gain strength for a long journey’ (2001\_11\_10).

This is a powerful and far reaching meta-ethical claim that has political consequences. By casting God as an actor within the tragedy plot, it was possible to foreground normative characterisations and make them appear organic. Consequently, the Bush administration began constructing the events of 9/11 and its perpetrators as a product of ‘evil’:

Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by *evil*, despicable acts of terror ... Today, our nation saw *evil*, the very worst of human nature ... The search is underway for those who are behind these *evil acts* ... "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no *evil*, for You are with me." (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

Instructively, by understanding that the Bush administration was using the term ‘evil’ as part of a moral realist claim, it is possible to infer that the term is not merely being used to denote strong disapproval. Rather, an ontological claim was being made that depoliticised the acts. As Richard Jackson argues, the reason for the attacks was being ‘firmly rooted in the identity and nature of the attackers’ (2005: 54). The source of the attacks, and the uncertainty they produced, was diagnosed and constructed as being intrinsic to the identity of the enemy. Accordingly, the events of 9/11 were not portrayed as a product of political grievances, but as part of an ongoing moral battle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’:

This will be a monumental struggle of *good versus evil*. But *good* will prevail (Bush 2001\_09\_12a).

This binary is instructive as it established the demarcation of identities that would dominate the Bush administration’s political tenure. Moreover, this was accompanied by a series of binary identity constructions that essentialised the identity of the “terrorists” and “Americans” (see table 5). This constructed vernacular was extended to other strategic actors. In President Bush’s address to the nation on September 11, the President personally included the statement, in consultation with Condoleezza Rice:

We will make no distinction between *the terrorists* who committed these acts and *those who harbor them*<sup>103</sup> (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

This logic of equivalence is significant because it disregarded conceptions of national sovereignty with regard to terrorism. In what some have termed the ‘first Bush doctrine’ the ‘evil’ enemy was not just ‘terrorists’ but also states that collaborated or permitted

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<sup>103</sup> The word ‘harbor’ was included after the terms tolerated and encouraged were considered too vague by the President (Woodward 2002: 30). Moreover it is important to note that this passage was not a spontaneous decision. Candidate Bush had made a similar claim in the 1999 Republican primaries, and consequently this assertion was drawn from and framed by previously declared policy statements (see Bush 1999\_09\_23).

terrorist training on their soil (see Singer 2004: 144-53). This was a significant articulation, in which the Bush administration began characterising the enemy as ‘terrorists and states’. Moreover, it established a new set of rules concerning how other states should behave, as Ari Fleisher declared when asked ‘when Mr. Wolfowitz talked about putting an end to states that harbor terrorists, did he mean to say that U.S. policy is to wipe out governments that sponsor terrorists?’, his response was:

Well, I can only say, in the President's words and as the President said, the U.S. will use all our resources to conquer the enemy. *And anybody who chooses to be America's enemy will have to think about what that means* (Fleischer 2001\_09\_13).

Evident in the construction of an American ‘we’ and the terrorist ‘Other’, in a binary formation, was the extent to which the Bush administration attempted to attribute depoliticised motivations for the attacks. The terrorist’s actions were portrayed as deriving from this binary identity structure; ‘they’ acted because ‘they’ are ‘evil’ and ‘we’ were targeted because ‘we’ are ‘good’. As Donald Rumsfeld argued,

[I]n targeting this place [the Pentagon] ... and those who worked here, the attackers, *the evildoers* correctly sensed that *the opposite of all they were*, and *stood for, resided here* (Rumsfeld 2001\_10\_11).

Indeed, ‘good’, as the Bush administration deployed the term, was inextricably articulated with the concept of ‘freedom’. Consequently, notions of ‘good’ were conflated with ‘freedom’, whilst notions of ‘evil’ were conflated with ‘tyranny’:

In every generation, the world has produced *enemies of human freedom*. *They have attacked America, because we are freedom's home and defender* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

Americans are asking: Why do they hate us? *They hate* what we see right here in this chamber [the US Capitol Building] - a *democratically elected government*. *Their leaders are self-appointed*. *They hate our freedoms* - our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other ... These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and *end a way of life* (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

This is a long standing discourse that the Bush administration appropriated and deployed.

As Eric Foner expounds,

[N]o idea is more fundamental to Americans' sense of themselves as individuals and as a nation than freedom. The central term in our political vocabulary, "freedom"- or "liberty"... is deeply embedded in the documentary record of our history and the language of everyday life (1998: xiii).

This point is instructive because it demonstrates how the Bush administration re-appropriated the *American exceptionalist* myth, and through semantic innovation interwove it within the tragedy plot. Thus, lying behind the deployment of a 'language of evil' there are political functions, made possible by its ability to encode 'a reservoir of cultural forms and meanings' (Hariman 2003: 513).

The term *American exceptionalism* has its origins in Alex de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, where the American nation was referred to as 'exceptional'. It was Tocqueville therefore that noticed a qualitative difference between American society and 'other' parts of the world. He described the Pilgrim's emigration to New England as motivated by a desire to 'make an idea triumph' and noted that 'Puritanism was not only a religious doctrine; it also blended at several points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories' (2002 [1835]: 32). Significantly, de Tocqueville described how the Puritans saw themselves as doing 'God's work' in what they considered to be the 'New Israel', and argued that:

It is impossible to read this beginning without receiving, despite oneself, a religious and solemn impression; one seems to breathe an air of antiquity and a sort of biblical perfume (2002 [1835]: 33).

The parallel between biblical Israel and the Puritans establishment of a new nation dedicated to God, provided the potency from which the Puritans claimed that they were God's chosen people, and the new state was a beacon of light in the world. Such sentiments were echoed in a prayer given by Donald Rumsfeld in the aftermath of 9/11:

Ever-faithful God, in death we are reminded of the precious *birthrights of life and liberty You endowed in Your American people* ... We seek Your special blessing today for those who stand as sword and shield, *protecting the many from the tyranny of the few* ... We pray this day, Heavenly Father, the prayer our nation learned at another time of righteous struggle and noble cause—*America's enduring prayer: Not that God will be on our side, but always, O Lord, that America will be on Your side.* Amen. (2001\_09\_14).

Of particular interest in this passage is the manner in which there is an articulation between being God's chosen people and the concept of liberty. It reflects an insight made by de Tocqueville, who asserted that,

I have already said enough to put the character of Anglo-American civilisation in its true light. It is the product ... of two perfectly distinct elements that elsewhere have often made war with each other, but which, in America, they have succeeded in incorporating somehow into one another and combining marvellously. I mean to speak of the *spirit of religion* and the *spirit of freedom* (emphasis in original 2002 [1835]: 43).

This conjuncture of religious doctrine and political theory is insightful, because it captures what is meant by the myth of American exceptionalism. At a simplistic level, it could be construed as a comparative label of difference; however, the term is far more than this. It captures the profoundly religious origins of the 'chosen-ness vision' and an ideological vision of a way of life centred upon 'freedom' (see Hughes 2004: 19; Deudney and Meiser 2008). Further still, it captures the manner in which many Americans believe that the United States is a force for 'good' in the world because its political system represents the acme of political progress at the centre of the international order. Consequently, when members of the Bush administration began to construct a moral play between good/evil and freedom/tyranny they were not merely making normative judgements. Rather, these strategic actors were rearticulating and assimilating the events of 9/11 into a well established discourse constructed at the birth of the American nation. The importance of this to the eventual formation of the Freedom Agenda cannot be underestimated. Once the tragedy plot was interwoven with an



American exceptionalist discourse, the narrative presented by the Bush administration was able to provide meaning to the events in the image of a moral play whilst also providing characterisations of both 'America' and the 'terrorists'. Consequently, American Exceptionalism provided

the basic structure in which Americans organise their comprehension of and reaction to the terrorist attacks. In addition, by employing the legitimating power of nationalism to furnish the "official" interpretation of September 11, President George W. Bush was able to provide a context in which Americans could understand and accept a set of foreign policy goals far broader and more ambitious than a simple response to the immediate attacks would have suggested (McCartney 2004: 400).

Moreover, by invoking American exceptionalism the concept of 'freedom' was foregrounded, which provided a significant stepping-stone on the road to the eventual formation of the Freedom Agenda. The narrative presented was simplistic and obscured any political motivations for the attack, but it provided a sufficient description of the situation and endowed the events with meaning. It therefore laid the foundations for how the Bush administration was to market its response to the attacks; that is to say, the decisive intervention that would follow.

### **The Decisive Intervention: Crisis, War and Pearl Harbor**

Thus far, in this research, it has been shown how the Bush administration constructed a deeply religious narrative based around a tragedy plot that seamlessly transformed into a moral play. Both provided meaning to the events of September 11, 2001, and constructed characterisations of the actors involved. The significance of such factors is that they laid the groundwork for the Bush administration's decisive intervention to be readily accepted. Not only do they reveal the subjective perceptions that helped constitute the 'crisis' in the first instance, but they also defined the boundaries of what was politically feasible and what would be considered to be in the national interest. However, thus far

this chapter has not explicitly defined the nature of the Bush administration's decisive intervention. This has been largely a heuristic decision, but also reflects the manner in which the Bush administration strategically dealt with the events.

In Bob Woodward's account of September 11, 2001, he argued that President Bush decided that the day's events constituted an act of war upon being told that 'a second plane hit the second tower'<sup>104</sup>. In an interview with Bob Woodward, President Bush recalled his thoughts at the time; '*They have declared war on us*, and I made up my mind at that moment that *we were going to war*'<sup>105</sup> (see Woodward 2002: 15). In this manner, it is evident that the decision to cast the events as a declaration of war was not a well considered analytical decision with a well thought out plan. The President never considered plausible alternative readings of the events, such as constructing them as 'criminal exploits' or 'crimes against humanity', which could have placed the response into the international litigious realm (see Lawler 2002: 171). Nor was the President aware of who had perpetrated the attacks, rather 'America' was instantly deemed the victim and, consequently, 'America' would respond with a military response. Thus, at 9.44 am (Est.) September 11, 2001, the President told Dick Cheney, 'We're at war' and that he should brief the Congressional leadership. The President's temperament was expressed at the time through reported assertions such as 'when we find out who did this, they're not going to like me as President. Somebody is going to pay', and 'We're going to find out who did this ... and we're going to kick their asses' (in Woodward 2002: 17-18).

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<sup>104</sup> President Bush was told this whilst reading to second graders at the Emma E. Booker Elementary School in Sarasota, Florida, by Chief of Staff Andrew Card.

<sup>105</sup> It should be noted that the Woodward account firstly relies on the memory of the events that took place, and also that Woodward does have a propensity to summarise what was said throughout his work rather than give exact copies of his transcripts. This note should serve as a precaution to accepting Woodward's account as 'fact'. Rather Woodward's account should be seen as a secondary interpretation.

With the discursive deployment of 'war' as a response, the events were unsurprisingly constructed as a 'crisis'. More explicitly, the 'brute facts' of the events had been interpreted as needing a decisive intervention. President Bush became the key *strategic interpreter* in this decision, essentially making a judgement that set a new trajectory for US foreign and security policy. Accordingly, this marked an abrupt systemic transformation, caused by the perceived failure of past policy to provide security on American soil. From destruction came the need for construction, as 'war' became the perceived method of dealing with the 'uncertainty' and 'complexity' that 9/11 presented. Undoubtedly, following the events of 9/11, President Bush laid discursive tracks that would help move towards constructing a 'war plot'. This was done firstly at the Booker Elementary School, where the phrase 'Terrorism against our nation will not stand' was declared (Bush 2001\_09\_11a). The importance of this phrase is its clear intertextuality with President G. H. W. Bush's declaration that 'This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait' made before the first Gulf War (1990\_08\_05). Moreover, in the President's address to the nation on September 11 he asserted that:

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. *Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism* (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

This certainly demonstrates that the Bush administration was preparing to construct a 'war' plot. However, what is apparent from multiple accounts is that the wider implications of a 'war' plot were withheld from public disclosure. In the evening address, the line '*This is not just an act of terrorism. This is an act of war*', which reflected the President's discussions with his NSC staff, was cut from the public address. The reason for this was that the President saw his administration's mission as one of 'reassurance' (see Woodward 2002: 30-31; Frum 2003: 124-33). The exclusion and

inclusion of text within the speech is therefore highly significant. It demonstrates strategic thinking on behalf of the President and members of his administration, and a deliberate attempt to 'shape a message'. To the extent that this was done by the administration, it reveals a deliberate attempt to frame the events in a manner that resonated with the American public and would allow further action to be taken. As such, the president saw his role as allowing the Dionysian aspect of a tragedy to unfold, and therefore not to make apparent the nature of his conceived decisive intervention in the immediate aftermath of the events. Constructing the national tragedy plot and moral play was to take precedence over an abrupt assertion of how to directly respond. However, by constructing a moral play as a specific understanding of the events, the Bush administration was also laying the foundations for its eventual decisive intervention being widely accepted. The administration was describing the paradise lost through tragedy, before asserting how it would be regained.

To the extent that the President did begin scripting a direct response, it was muted. The President asserted that:

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. *I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice* (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

Such a response clearly left alternative policies to 'war' as possible options. This point was not lost on certain members of the Bush administration that wanted to forge ahead and make the decision to go to war public. For David Frum 'the speech Bush had delivered was not a war speech. It was a hastily revised compassionate conservatism speech' (2003: 128). Relatedly, the decision to construct the acts as a 'declaration of war' was initially an area of political contestation. Rather than a 'war construction' being inevitable, it is important to note that early objections to it were voiced. On September

12, 2001, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle cautioned the president to take care with his rhetoric saying ‘war is a powerful word’ (Woodward 2002: 45). Moreover, whilst some commentators, such as Lawrence Freedman, have argued that ‘whether or not to go to war was not an American choice’, this is a deeply problematic assessment (2002: 37). This position not only writes out notions of strategic agency, but under international law the events did not constitute an ‘act of war’, because they were not carried out by a sovereign state (Lawler 2002: 154-5). As Roy Stager Jacques has argued,

technically I might quibble that an act of war can be made only by an entity capable of conducting a war. Countries start wars; people commit crimes. What I am decorated for doing under my country’s flag in war, I am imprisoned or executed for doing under my own volition in crime (2002: 26).

Despite such objections, on September 12, 2001 President Bush deployed the line he had formerly suppressed:

The deliberate and deadly attacks which were carried out yesterday against our country were *more than acts of terror. They were acts of war.* This will require our country to unite in steadfast determination and resolve. Freedom and democracy are under attack (2001\_09\_12a).

This marked the first public construction of a war plot, and signified the nature of the Bush administration’s decisive intervention.

Significantly, historical analogy played an important role in constructing the events as an act of war. In particular, the manner in which the events were compared to the bombing of Pearl Harbor should not be underestimated. Such sentiments reflect the president’s diary entry made on September 11, ‘The Pearl Harbour of the 21<sup>st</sup> century took place today’ (in Woodward 2002: 37). This became a commonly deployed strategic analogy throughout the Bush administration’s tenure, with assertions such as:

We’ve had oceans which have protected us over our history. *Except for Pearl Harbor, we’ve never really been hit before. And yet, on September 11th, this great land came under attack* (Bush 2001\_10\_24).

I joined the men and women of the USS Enterprise to mark the 60th anniversary of *Pearl Harbor*. December 7th, 1941 was a *decisive day that changed our nation forever*. In a single moment, America's "splendid isolation" was ended ... September 11th, 2001 ... set another dividing line in our lives and in the life of our nation ... A faraway evil became a present danger (Bush 2001\_12\_11).

For my country, the *events of September the 11th were as decisive as the attack on Pearl Harbor* ... And *the lesson of all those events is the same*: aggression and evil intent must not be ignored or appeased; they must be opposed early and decisively (Bush 2003\_05\_31).

The use of this historical analogy is important. Firstly, it rendered the attacks comprehensible by not allowing the meaning of the events to remain in flux, and secondly, it framed the events within a particular interpretation; this was an undeserved attack on an innocent nation, which necessitated America fight a 'just' war. Such a comparison allowed a seamless elicitation of American's collective understanding of World War II. This dimension is especially pronounced in the last quote that informs the audience that not only are the two events comparable, but the lessons of World War II were directly transferable to the 'war on terror'. Such a construction established a very specific rule structure; America should not appease the perpetrators and America must confront the perpetrators through violent means.

This rule structure was heavily reinforced in and through assertions such as,

*[W]e have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions -- by abandoning every value except the will to power -- they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies* (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

*In a second world war, we learned there is no isolation from evil. We affirmed that some crimes are so terrible they offend humanity, itself. And we resolved that the aggressions and ambitions of the wicked must be opposed early, decisively, and collectively, before they threaten us all. That evil has returned, and that cause is renewed* (Bush 2001\_11\_10).

The rule structure, derived from the Pearl Harbor and World War II analogy, remade and

reinforced the notion that the events of September 11, 2001 were an ‘act of war’, and provided guidance on how America should proceed. Yet, the Bush administration, via the World War II analogy, was also assimilating the events into a wider historical narrative. The discursive link to World War II tied the framing of September 11, 2001 to the same plot, and popularly held beliefs over why America went to war in 1941. It created a sense of American innocence as a peaceful nation reluctant to engage in international affairs, but when attacked had no choice but to respond against this evil enemy. Just as the Nazis embodied ‘evil’ and could not be appeased, the same must be true of these new ‘enemies of liberty’. The parallels between Hitler’s Germany were encoded in the ‘9/11 crisis’ narrative, and once decoded by the interpellator suggest the need for a decisive intervention to stop the enemy at all costs. This framing rendered appeasement an illegitimate action; appeasement was not a solution to this threat derived from ‘evil’ just as it was not a solution to dealing with Hitler’s Germany.

Simultaneously, the analogy informs the audience about what action must be taken in the future; just as the former ‘evil’ regimes with totalitarian ideologies were strategically engaged and defeated in the past, the same must be done to defeat terrorism and its state sponsors. This opened the door for terrorists to be assimilated into contemporary understandings of the Nazis, with expansionist intentions driven by an evil ideology, therefore constituting a global threat to liberty and freedom:

*I believe this war is more akin to World War II ... This is a war in which we fight for the liberties and freedom of our country (Bush 2002\_03\_13).*

Intertextual appeals to World War II further supported the notion that the attackers carried out their attack because they were ‘evil’. Thus, it was through an interpretation of the past, once applied to the events of September 11, that ‘going to war’ was cast as a legitimate and rational response; it was how America had responded in the past and so

represented how America should respond again. Simply put, the construction of a war plot, analogous to World War II, turned a tragedy and moral play into a moralistic crusade.

To use the term ‘moralistic crusade’ is provocative, as it conjures historical images of a religiously driven military campaign particularly targeted against Muslims. Yet, using this term is unavoidable given the President’s assertions that:

We need to be alert to the fact that these evil-doers still exist. We haven't seen this kind of barbarism in a long period of time...*This crusade, this war on terrorism* is going to take a while (Bush 2001\_09\_16).

Moreover, the term ‘moralistic crusade’ captures a specific dimension of American exceptionalism. This has been best elucidated and empirically accounted for by Seymour Martin Lipset, who argued that,

Americans are utopian moralists who press hard to institutionalise virtue, to destroy evil people, and eliminate wicked institutions and practices. A majority even tell pollsters that God is the moral guiding force of American democracy. They tend to view social and political dramas as morality plays, as a battle between God and the Devil, so that compromise is virtually unthinkable ... A sense of moral absolutism is, of course, part of what some people see as problematic about American foreign policy (1996: 63).

A significant aspect of the moral absolutist subsidiary of the American exceptionalist discourse, is that, whilst national identity constructs an ‘us’ and ‘them’, moral absolutism inscribes characterisations to this dyad. It posits the ‘insider status’ of the imagined community as morally ‘good’ with God on America’s side, whilst the binary opposite ‘outsider status’, as a logical corollary, is evil and demonic. This particular feature was highly evident in the Bush administration’s narrative, as tragedy was transformed to moralistic crusade, God supposedly took America’s side in this meta-conflict:

The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that *God is not*



*neutral between them* (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

Once an expression of difference has been turned into ‘Otherness’, bifurcated along religious conceptions of good and evil, it becomes coherently possible for Americans to define wars as moralistic crusades<sup>106</sup>. The result of such moralistic crusades is to insist on ‘unconditional surrender’ of the enemy in war, the reason of which is the ascribed relationship between going to war and the moral righteousness that motivates it. Thus, as Lipset argues,

we [Americans] set moral goals, such as ‘to make the world safe for democracy’, as reasons to go to war. We have always fought the ‘Evil Empire’. Ronald Reagan was as American as apple pie when he spoke of the evil empire as the enemy. But if we fight the evil empire, if we fight Satan, then he must not be allowed to survive (1996: 65).

Once again, the Bush administration appropriated and reconstructed this tradition. It presented a moralistic crusade as the solution to the perceived crisis. Consequently, arguing that the nature of its decisive intervention was clear:

*Our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

*In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America, because we are freedom's home and defender. And the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time* (Bush 2001\_09\_14).

This will not be an age of terror; this will be *an age of liberty, here and across the world* ... In our grief and anger we have found *our mission* and our moment. *Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom* - the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time - now depends on us (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

Several elements require elucidation to generate a greater understanding of this discursive framing. Firstly, what is strikingly clear about this formulation of the initial policy response, was that the accompanying narrative was ‘utopian, transformative, [and] derived from a perspective that sees history as a contest of ideas and minds more than of

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<sup>106</sup> To eliminate monarchical rule (the War of 1812), to defeat the Catholic forces of superstition (the Mexican War), to eliminate slavery (the Civil War), to end colonialism in the Americas (the Spanish-American War), to make the world safe for democracy (World War One), and to resist totalitarian expansion (World War Two and Korea) (Lipset 1996: 65).

battalions and budgets' (Mazarr 2003: 513). Out of the crisis brought on by the September 11, 2001 attacks, emerged a dogmatic liberal idealism embodied in the language deployed by the Bush administration. In effect, the ideological-discursive formation set out in the 2000 presidential campaign became reinvigorated, and the 'war on terror' was now seen as the overarching rationale in US foreign policy. In this context, the phrase '*the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time*' is important because it has two interrelated purposes, the first is the manner in which it establishes a sense of America's liberal tradition, and the second is a direct appeal to America's foundational myth. Thus, as Hughes argues, 'Every schoolchild learns that the Puritans settled America for the sake of freedom' (2004: 28). It therefore has impact by appealing to the American cultural terrain and creating a discursive relationship between America's mission and liberal beliefs (see Hughes 2004: 2). It resonates with, and re-constructs, American identity, consequently rendering American exceptionalism as inextricably linked to how American's identify themselves ideologically in liberal terms (Wittkopf et al. 2002: 246).

The second element that requires elucidation is the manner in which the discursive framing allowed a policy response to emerge that was remarkably simplistic in its prescription. To construct a policy based around 'ridding the world of evil', at first glance appears absurd, not least because of the statement's metaphysical nature and sheer scale. This is especially true as the president would later assert that '*anybody* who tries to affect the lives of our *good* citizens *is evil*' (Bush 2001\_10\_24). However upon closer analysis it is clear that the Bush administration was constructing the national interest focused upon a broad counter-terrorism strategy that targeted a 'tactic' rather than a specific enemy; a verb, not a noun.

Nations all across the globe have bound with the United States to send a clear

message that *we'll fight terrorism* wherever it may exist (Bush 2001\_10\_24).

The men and women aboard Flight 93 ... if they could see how our country is united to preserve freedom from terror, they'd be proud. Proud of our unity, proud of our strength, and *proud of the determination to find, root out and deal with the evil of terrorism and those who seek to terrorize* (Rumsfeld 2001\_12\_11).

The strategy that the Bush administration was adopting was embedded in the very title '*war against terrorism*' (Bush 2001\_09\_11c). Thus, as David H. Dunn argues,

there was no apparent attempt to address the underlying causes [of terrorism] - it was a policy which acted as if there were a finite number of terrorists and all that was needed was for them to be tracked down and eliminated (2005: 17).

This is an approach that many commentators have referred to, because throughout the Bush tenure the President would constantly require statistical figures asking 'how many did we kill?' and 'they killed three of ours. How many did we kill of them?' as a sign of 'progress' (see Woodward 2006: 319-20; 482-3). This 'scorecard' approach is a direct consequence of moral realism being embedded within the Bush administration's ideological-discursive formation. Indeed, to 'rid the world of evil' implies an ontological status; evil is used as a noun and not an adjective. Yet, what is absolutely fundamental to understanding the Bush administration's discourse is that it had conflated destroying 'evil' with producing and advancing 'freedom', and this was now America's 'mission'.

### **Laying Discursive Tracks for the Freedom Agenda to Evolve**

Before proceeding to the next phase of this process-tracing narrative analysis, it is worthwhile summarising this last chapter and making its findings explicit. Thus far it has been shown how the events of September 11, 2001 were initially constructed as a 'tragedy', which gave birth to a reinvigorated patriotism in America. Moreover, in conferring meaning to the events, the Bush administration cast God as an actor in what they strategically selected to construct as a moral play. In turn, this moral play was

seamlessly transformed into a war plot, in which moral realism and American exceptionalism were foregrounded as defining parts of the Bush administration's ideological-discursive formation. In all three analytically divisible plots, characterisations of the enemy consisted of inscribing their identities and motivations for the attacks as 'evil'. Moreover, a logic of equivalence was made between those that perpetrated the attacks and the states that harboured them.

The construction of a war plot, aided by analogies with Pearl Harbor and World War II, laid the foundations for the Bush administration's decisive intervention into the constructed crisis. In doing so, it sought to restrict the uncertainty condition faced by strategic actors in the state system, but also provided the content of political change that was to follow. Accordingly, as explained by the constructivist institutionalist methodology, 9/11 represented an abrupt systemic transformation in political time; it was a moment of punctuation from which crisis resolutions evolve. However, the narrative that emerged from this moment is crucial, as it was the narrative that provided answers to questions such as 'what has gone wrong?', and 'what is to be done?' Consequently, the context of post-crisis action cannot be divorced from an understanding of the crisis. In defining the events as an 'act of war', the Bush administration was reacting to the events, but also prescribing the form of political change that was to follow. Crucially, as Richard Jackson has argued,

[T]he important point is that this construction of the attacks as 'war' ... was probably the most significant and far reaching aspect of the entire official discourse. It set the foundations for almost everything that followed ... it was in no sense inevitable and the use of different words would have given an entirely different understanding to September 11, 2001 - which in turn would have altered the entire response to the attacks (2005: 40).

This is certainly the case for the emergence of the Freedom Agenda. The declaration that

America was attacked because of its status as a 'beacon for freedom and opportunity' is not a neutral discursive act - it is a (re)construction of American identity. Yet, by declaring this, discursive tracks were laid that gave rise to the notion that America must defeat 'evil' and 'advance freedom'. This was an idealist vision of history and of America's role in the world, which was increasingly giving rise to a utopian orientation and moralistic crusade. Accordingly, whilst it was highly evident that US foreign policy radically changed following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the idealist narrative that emerged as part of the '9/11 crisis' narrative assimilated the events into a longer historical understanding of US foreign policy. This was done by directly appealing to the international idealism of the Wilsonian legacy, and its transformational vision that became popular in America after World War II (see Nye 2007). Moreover, in a world of triumphant exhilarance and Fukuyama's 'end of history', the Bush administration presented the need to bring others into the so-called 'post-historical phase'.

That an attack on 'freedom', meaning 'America', required spreading 'freedom' was certainly a contestable proposition. However, by deploying the concept of freedom as the utopian goal of the war on terrorism, the President had invited contestation within the administration itself. Thus, before the Freedom Agenda was officially sanctioned, individuals within the Bush administration, such as Paula J. Dobriansky, the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, declared that,

[O]ur overall goal is not just fighting against terrorism; it is fighting for civilization and democracy ... the advancement of human rights and democracy is important in its own right. At the same time, these efforts are the bedrock of our war on terrorism. The violation of human rights by repressive regimes provides fertile ground for popular discontent. In turn, this discontent is cynically exploited by terrorist organisations and their supporters. By contrast, a stable government that responds to the legitimate desires of its people and respects their rights, shares power, respects diversity, and seeks to unleash the creative potential of all elements of society is a powerful antidote to extremism (Dobriansky

2001\_12\_21).

The ideas expressed by Secretary Dobriansky were not widely espoused within the administration, but would soon gather momentum and become institutionalised as the rationale for the Freedom Agenda. Equally, a competing view of how to combat terrorism and promote freedom began to emerge from the Office of the United States Trade Representative. Just nine days after the terrorist attacks, Robert B. Zoellick wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Post* arguing that,

Our enemy's selection of targets – the White House, the Pentagon and the World Trade Towers – recognises that America's might and light emanate from our political, military and economic vitality. Our counteroffensive must advance U.S. leadership across all these fronts ... America is the economic engine for freedom, opportunity and development ... Trade is about more than economic efficiency. It promotes the values at the heart of this protracted struggle ... Congress needs to complete action on the U.S. free trade agreement with Jordan, our first such commitment in the Arab world ... The terrorists deliberately chose the World Trade towers as their target. While their blow toppled the towers, it cannot and will not shake the foundation of world trade and freedom (Zoellick 2001\_11\_20).

In effect, Zoellick was espousing the neoliberal definition of freedom set out during the 2000 presidential campaign; in which freedom and free trade were indivisible. Yet, under the banner of 'raising the flag of economic leadership', Zoellick was asking Congress to pass "Fast Track" legislation, that would allow the administration to bypass committee deliberations and full congressional debate. Articulating the need for 'free trade' under the proviso of combating terrorism and spreading freedom was largely derided by Congress. Consequently, Charlie Rangel, the Democratic Congressman from New York, asserted that,

to appeal to patriotism in an effort to force Congress to move on Fast Track by claiming it is needed to fight terrorism would be laughable if it weren't so serious (in Juhasz 2006: 18).

Yet, this was the first articulation by a prominent member of the Bush administration, that free trade was needed to fight terror and spread 'freedom'. This is an idea that would lead the Bush administration to declare the *Middle East Free Trade Area* initiative on

May 9, 2003. As such, the construction of crisis resulting from 9/11 clearly has implications on the construction of the Freedom Agenda. It opened up a political space for contestation within the administration over what exactly ‘the calling of our fathers’ entails, albeit with the prevailing narrative inscribing the need for a ‘war on terrorism’ to achieve it. What is notable about this political space, is that it was bound by a binary between those that believed the response should be to focus on the ‘eradication’ of terrorism and those, such as Zoellick and Dobriansky, that saw the need for a wider response that addressed the ‘causes’ of terrorism. In the initial aftermath of the attacks, the official narrative presented by the President focused on eradication. The situation was one in which the President was constructing the plot of a moral crusade, whilst other parts of his administration were developing the initial ideas that would shape the nature of that moral crusade into the evolution of the Freedom Agenda. Given this situation, the war in Afghanistan, and then the formulation of the war in Iraq, would play a crucial role in tipping the balance between these two schools of thought. Consequently, it is crucial to analyse the part they played in the post-crisis evolution of the Freedom Agenda.

## **9. The Post-Crisis Evolution of the Freedom Agenda: The Unfolding of War, Lessons Learned and Rules Made**

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001 Presidential approval ratings soared, going from 51% in a poll conducted from September 7-10, to 90% by September 22, 2001 (Gallup 2009). This was just one empirical expression of patriotism that emerged in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, in which patriotism began to mean ‘uncritical support of whatever actions the President deems appropriate’ (Foner 2002: 51). This factor was not lost upon members of the Bush administration. Karl Rove saw his job as making sure broad support was used effectively, as head of the *Office of Strategic Initiatives* his objective was to ‘shape and manipulate sources of public opinion, much as in a political campaign, to help advance the Bush agenda and policies’ (McClellan 2008: 77; 117). The events of September 11 provided the perfect milieu for this, because as Bob Woodward explains, Rove calculated that, ‘in the past, when the public rallied around the president in times of crisis, the boost in popularity lasted seven to ten months’ (in Woodward 2006: 81, 2002: 206). For Donald Rumsfeld, September 11 provided ‘the kind of opportunities that World War II offered, to refashion the world’ (in Bacevich 2002: 227). Further still, on September 11 itself President Bush remarked that ‘This is an opportunity ... we have to think of this as an opportunity’ (in Woodward 2002: 32).

However, the nature of the new strategically selective context, provided by September 11, 2001, and how the Bush administration would seize upon it, was not made immediately clear to the public. In the previous chapter, it has been shown that in the immediate aftermath of the attacks the Bush administration was targeting the tactic of terrorism and harbouring states. It had established a war plot that was seamlessly transformed into a moralistic crusade. Moreover, by defining the events as a product of evil and an ongoing war between freedom and tyranny, it was clear that the Bush



administration had laid the discursive tracks towards the Freedom Agenda. However, between this period and the official declaration of a *forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East* on November 11, 2003, lies a great vista of time in which the Bush administration expanded, enhanced, refined, and even contradicted its initial construction of the war on terror. This fact is unsurprising given that within the two years that followed September 11, 2001, the US would undertake two foreign wars, re-engage in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and begin to define a strategy that would ‘democratise’ the Middle East. The birth of the Freedom Agenda is not separate from these developments; it is a product of them. It is the result of strategically selective agents arguing, diagnosing, proselytising, and imposing various notions of what caused the crisis in the first place, and how to deal with such a threat to provide ‘security’. The Freedom Agenda is the institutionalisation of such processes. Consequently, this historical period requires serious scrutiny because it reveals how and why the Freedom Agenda developed. This dynamic has not been well documented within current literature on the Freedom Agenda. As David H. Dunn has argued,

while it is widely recognised that American foreign policy changed quite radically following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, what is less obvious in the commentaries of these events is how much the foreign policy strategies adopted by the United States have continued to evolve and change since that time. This is the case in part because America’s responses are often presented, especially by the Bush administration, as part of one relatively continuous or seamless approach (2005: 1).

All too often the decision to ‘democratise’ the MENA has been described as a direct result of September 11, 2001, but the nature of its development as the war on terror unfolded has been ignored. Such a gap in the literature is deeply problematic, because it is only by analysing the creeping insurrection of the policy, that it is possible to understand *how* it is constituted and *why* it was done in this way. Thus, to generate a greater understanding of the policy, it is necessary to look at its pre-formative

institutional development before leaping to its moment of institutional birth. Such an approach provides a more holistic understanding and allows post-institutional changes to be rendered evident. It is to this task that this chapter now turns.

In what follows it will be argued that following the construction of a moralistic crusade, the Bush administration set itself upon a ‘first things first’ strategy. Within this time frame the administration began developing a ‘three pronged response’, firstly, to deal with Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, secondly, to deal decisively with Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, and thirdly, to reform the Middle East. Whilst these three prongs are analytically separate, it will be shown that they were in fact strongly related through the ideological-discursive formation that the Bush administration presented.

### **Prong One of this Moral Crusade: A Just New War in Afghanistan**

A considerable amount of literature has covered, and will continue to cover, the US involvement in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001. As such the aim of this section is not to go over well trodden ground, but rather to render apparent the elements of this war that pertain to the construction of the Freedom Agenda. This will be done by focusing on how this war was narrated, and how the narrative that emerged from September 11, 2001 was modified by this war as it began to unfold towards constructing the Freedom Agenda. In particular it is necessary to demonstrate how the war with Afghanistan was constructed as a ‘Just War’ and led the Bush administration into nation-building.

As outlined previously, in President Bush’s address to the nation on September 11, 2001, the President personally included the statement:

We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

This was a significant discursive move that fundamentally changed the characterisation of the perceived enemy in the narrative. This move allowed the Bush administration to proceed as if this was a ‘traditional war’ between sovereign states, rather than dealing with a much more amorphous transnational terrorist network. In essence, this move allowed geographical boundaries to be drawn and provided the initial target for a moralistic crusade; Afghanistan. As Richard Falk has argued, ‘it provided the American people with a tangible battlefield on which their right to self-defense could be exercised in a vivid and reassuring manner’ (2003: 62; also see Dunn 2005).

By providing a geographical location it was evident that this moralistic crusade ‘to rid the world of evil’ and ‘advance human freedom’ was to begin with Afghanistan, in what was deemed to be a ‘Just War’. Consequently, the concept of ‘justice’ was widely invoked:

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for *justice* and peace ... we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and *just* in our world (Bush 2001\_09\_11c).

Whether we bring our *enemies to justice*, or *bring justice to our enemies*, *justice will be done* ... Freedom and fear, *justice and cruelty*, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them .... Fellow citizens, we will meet violence with *patient justice* - assured of the rightness of our cause (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

[W]e're making good progress in *a just cause* ... It may take a long time, but no matter how long it takes, those who killed thousands of Americans and citizens from over 80 other nations will be *brought to justice*, and the misuse of Afghanistan as a training ground for terror will end (Bush 2001\_11\_06).

We are deliberately and systematically hunting down these murderers, and we will bring them to *justice* (Bush 2001\_11\_08).

What is particularly interesting about this range of quotes is the manner in which there are three different types of ‘justice’ being appealed to. Firstly, retributive justice in which members of the Bush administration invoked the need to hold individuals accountable and punish the perpetrators of the attacks and the Taliban regime:

All I can tell you is that *Osama bin Laden is a prime suspect, and the people who house him, encourage him, provide food, comfort or money are on notice...*we're going to find those who - those evil-doers, those barbaric people who attacked our country and we're going to *hold them accountable*, and we're going to *hold the people who house them accountable*; the *people who think they can provide them safe havens will be held accountable*; the *people who feed them will be held accountable* (Bush 2001\_09\_17).

The Bush administration's espoused narrative asserted that an injustice had been done, and that there was therefore a need to exact a just punishment. Yet, because the concept of justice was embedded within the plot of a moralistic crusade, it is evident that this retributive dimension was not litigious. For example, the term justice, used by the administration, did not invoke Emmanuel Kant's notion of retributive justice as a legal concept, in which punishment is imposed on the guilty party, and not used as a means to promote some other good<sup>107</sup>. The moralistic crusade plot contradicts this, as the war on terror was not just about punishment per se, but described as being motivated for the greater good of 'ridding the world of evil' and 'advancing human freedom'. The terrorists had not merely committed a 'crime', but rather 'declared war'. Within the narrative presented by the Bush administration the notion of a criminal trial was irrevocably written out as a possible option; there was not to be any cross-examinations or study of forensic evidence in a courtroom prior to punishment<sup>108</sup>. This logic was certainly presented by President Bush,

I also had a responsibility to show resolve ... No yielding. No equivocation. *No, you know, lawyering this thing to death, that we're after 'em.* And that was not only for domestic, for the people at home to see. It was also vitally important for the rest of the world to watch (in Woodward 2002: 96).

This corresponds with Richard A. Clarke's account in which he asserts that the President

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<sup>107</sup> Indeed Kant makes this point rather poignantly when he argued that 'Judicial punishment can never be used merely as a means to promote some other good for the criminal himself or for civil society, but instead it must in all cases be imposed on him only on the ground that he has committed a crime; for a human being can never be manipulated merely as a means to the purposes of someone else and never be included among objects of the Law of things' (Kant 1999 [1797]: 331).

<sup>108</sup> For a legal argument supporting the case for war see Geoffrey Robertson QC (2006) *Crimes Against Humanity*, pp.511-21.

declared that,

I want you all to understand that we are at war and we will stay at war until this is done. Nothing else matters. Everything is available for the pursuit of this war. *Any barriers in your way, they're gone.*

Moreover, when Donald Rumsfeld informed the President that international law did not allow retribution<sup>109</sup>, only the prevention of further attacks, he averred that '*I don't care what the international lawyers say, we're going to kick some ass*' (in Clarke 2004: 24). Such a statement is revealing, because it articulates retributive justice with "frontier justice" (McCarthy 2002: 128-9). This is justice taken into an individual or groups' own hands irrespective of the legal ramifications. It represents a lawless state of nature where justice is swift as it is exacted by "Judge Lynch's Court". This romantic Wild West image was certainly evoked by the administration:

*I want justice. There's an old poster out west, as I recall, that said, "Wanted: Dead or Alive" ... All I want and America wants him brought to justice* (Bush 2001\_09\_17).

Well, the president's policy is *dead or alive*. And, you know, I have my preference but that's not a government position ... We'll have to keep, as the president said, *closing the noose* (Rumsfeld 2001\_11\_21).

In this context the Bush administration had deemed itself judge and jury, and would 'bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies'. This image was reinforced by the President's repeated assertions that the US would 'hunt down' those responsible:

The United States will *hunt down and punish those responsible* for these cowardly acts (Bush 2001\_09\_11b).

*We hunt an enemy* that hides in shadows and caves (Bush 2001\_11\_06).

Our military is pursuing its mission ... We are *deliberately and systematically hunting down these murderers, and we will bring them to justice* ... Our government has a responsibility to *hunt down our enemies* - and we will (Bush 2001\_11\_08).

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<sup>109</sup> This presumably refers to General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV) (1970) (Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations among States).

The manner in which the term hunting was used is deeply provocative as it helps reinforce the characterisation of the enemy as sub-human. As Erin McCarthy argues, 'the repeated use of the word "hunting" cannot be meant but to evoke images of hunting animals and shooting to kill' (2002: 131). When the terms justice and hunting are articulated together, the two terms seek to legitimise coercion; it is acceptable to kill as it is just, and justice is deliverable through killing.

Problematically, the notion that it is possible to 'hunt' your enemy and deliver 'justice' raises a possible contradiction in the Bush administration's ideological-discursive formation. The manner in which the President deployed the concept of retributive justice, looked past the events of September 11, 2001 as violent acts which were offensive in-and-of-themselves, and instantly identified the attackers as 'evil'. In this scheme it was deemed acceptable to violently 'hunt' the attackers down, because it was not murder itself that was intrinsically wrong, but rather the fact that the acts had been perpetrated against 'good America'. However, because 'America' was being characterised as 'good', the Bush administration's actions were described as justified, and obfuscated the notion that murder was intrinsically wrong; how else could it be seen as a just act to murder someone as a punishment? (see Hewitt 2002: 448).

This is a significant point because the Bush administration posited moral realism as a philosophical tenet, suggesting that moral values have an ontologically-objective status. Yet, at the same time, the administration sought to legitimise the use of violence as a means to bringing about justice. As such, there is a tension in the narrative presented by the administration between the subscribed philosophical tenets and the recommended practice. To square this circle, the Bush administration utilised a third conception of justice to legitimise the war, by construing it as a 'Just War'. This was certainly the

implication intended when the Department of Defense originally titled the Afghanistan campaign *Operation Infinite Justice*<sup>110</sup>. This title was changed because of deeply religious connotations it has in some branches of Islam; in which only Allah can deliver such finality (see BBC 2001). However, this did not prevent members of the Bush administration from claiming that:

Our military action is also designed to ... drive them out and bring them to *justice* ... To all the men and women in our military ... I say this: Your mission is defined; your objectives are clear; *your goal is just* (Bush 2001\_10\_07).

Our cause is necessary. *Our cause is just* (Bush 2001\_12\_11).

I assure you and all who have lost a loved one that our *cause is just* ... *Our cause is just*, and it continues ... We seek a *just* and peaceful world beyond the war on terror (Bush 2002\_01\_29).

The history of Just War theory has deeply religious roots in the Judeo-Christian history. Thus, although Just War theory dates back to Ancient Greece, and philosophers such as Cicero, it was also closely associated with Christianity from the early Christians in the Roman Empire through to the Late Medieval period. Just War represented the attempt to reconcile Jesus' preaching's of pacifism with inconsistencies between the Gospels and the Old Testament (see Bellamy 2006: 15-29). Yet, it was in the Medieval period that the concept of Just War became fused with the notions of a crusade and holy war (Russell 1975; also see Morris 2002: 152-3). The implication of invoking such a concept clearly adds to the moralistic crusade plot constructed by the Bush administration, and reinforces the characterisation of the US as a moral actor.

For many political commentators launching a war against both al Qaeda and the Taliban was seen as a Just War, along the lines presented by the Bush administration. Even long term critic of US foreign policy Richard Falk argued that,

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<sup>110</sup> This title Operation Infinite Justice has a clear intertextuality with Operation Infinite Reach, which was President Clinton's response to the US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

I have never since my childhood supported a shooting war in which the United States was involved ... The war in Afghanistan against apocalyptic terrorism qualifies in my understanding as the first truly just war since World War II (Falk 2001).

It should however be noted that Falk argues that for this to be a Just War, the means of war also need to be just. This has been a long standing distinction in Just War theory, which makes a distinction between *jus as bellum* and *jus in bello*; the justice of war and justice in war (Walzer 2006: 21-2). The Bush administration acknowledged this distinction and presented the military conduct of the war as equally just. This was done through assertions such as:

The United States respects the people of Afghanistan -- after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid -- but we condemn the Taliban regime (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

The oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we'll also drop food, medicine and supplies to the starving and suffering men and women and children of Afghanistan (Bush 2001\_10\_07).

Our efforts are directed at terrorist and military targets because - unlike our enemies - we value human life. We do not target innocent people, and we grieve for the difficult times the Taliban have brought to the people of their own country (Bush 2001\_11\_06).

By presenting the war with Afghanistan as just, both in deed and through deeds, Just War theory was presented both adjectivally and adverbially. Yet, serious questions remain about the 'justness' of the war. For some proponents war was the just response because,

When a wound as grievous as that of September 11 has been inflicted on a body politic, it would be the height of irresponsibility - a derelict of duty, a flight from the serious vocation of politics - to fail to respond (Elshtain 2002: 264).

Such a statement is particularly disturbing as it casts war as the only option. Failure to go to war is simply cast as 'doing nothing' (see McCarthy 2002: 134-5). Yet, 'doing nothing' was not the only response available besides war. This point is particularly



pertinent because one of the key tenets of Just War theory is that all non-violent alternatives should be exhausted before initiating the war<sup>111</sup>. This is deeply problematic given that a decisive intervention in the form of a war was selected by the Bush administration within moments of hearing about the attacks, and the events were framed as a declaration of war publicly as early as September 12, 2001; War was the first choice, and not the last. The narrative presented by the Bush administration was deliberately strategic, and sought to write out alternatives to war within days of the ‘crisis’ taking place. Moreover, as Neta C. Crawford argues,

It has long been the official U.S. policy not to make concessions to, or strike deals with, terrorists. But when we define the world in either/or terms - you are either with us or with the terrorists- last resort is truncated. We never know whether force was really necessary, because it was the only way to deal with the problem<sup>112</sup> (2003: 15).

Recourse to dialogue and legalism were marginalised as possible responses to the crisis by the narrative presented by the Bush administration. The war plot established the direction of action and was reinforced by both a depoliticised conception of why the attacks occurred and the characterisation of the enemy. If you cannot negotiate with evil, nor change its ontological status, then the solution is to destroy it. This logic was not just presented by the Bush administration’s narrative, but supported by political commentators and academics, in sentiments such as,

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<sup>111</sup> My aim here is not to detail and explore all the tenets of Just War theory. For such an analysis see Crawford (2003), Singer (2004: 147-53) and McCarthy (2002).

<sup>112</sup> It should be noted that the notion of dialogue with al Qaeda has been met with ridicule and often presented as an idea prescribed to by the left of the political spectrum. However it is important to note that the idea of dialogue has also been presented by Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's former Chief of Staff, and Security minister Lord West (see BBC 2008; O'Neill 2008). It is notable that in Britain this is a product of experiences with the IRA. Similar sentiments were expressed by Bhikhu Parekh who argued that ‘We should not put terrorists outside the pale of rationale discourse but engage in a dialogue with them ... although such a dialogue is not easy against the background of spectacular terrorist acts, it is absolutely essential’ (Parekh 2002). A note of caution however should be expressed as to how such a position could be achieved practically. Questions concerning how such negotiations would take place, and about the specifics of the discussion have not been answered.

The aim of terrorism is terror. The terrorists did not issue a set of demands. They did not demand negotiation or else. They simply murdered. That is why one does not negotiate. There is nothing to negotiate about. Thus the talking ends and the call to responsible action begins (Elshtain 2002: 267).

Yet, even if one was sympathetic to this position, it did not necessarily extend to not negotiating with the Taliban. Instead, President Bush made ultimatums, explicitly setting out a very rigid rule structure:

The United States of America makes the following *demands* on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al-Qaida who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals - including American citizens - you have unjustly imprisoned, and protect foreign journalists, diplomats, and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. *These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion.* The Taliban must act and act immediately. *They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate* (Bush 2001\_09\_20).

This was met with Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, asking the US government to provide evidence of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the events of 9/11. If such a condition was met, then it was claimed that the Taliban would hand over bin Laden to an Islamic court in another Muslim country. Similarly, after Operation Enduring Freedom was launched, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef offered to hand over Osama bin Laden if the US presented them with evidence and stopped the bombing (Singer 2004: 151; Crenshaw 2003: 336-46; Robertson 2006: 526; Frantz 2001; Sharp 2003). Whether one believes the sincerity of these claims or not, it is clear that a non-violent opportunity to solve the conflict did present itself, but was not explored before or during the conflict. Under such circumstances it is clear that war was not the last resort, contradicting the administration's claims that this was a just war. Instead, President Bush forcefully asserted that,

*There is no need to negotiate. There's no discussions. I've told them exactly what*

*they need to do. And there is no need to discuss innocence or guilt. We know he's guilty ... I said no negotiations ... There's nothing to negotiate about. They're harboring a terrorist. And they need to turn him over, and not only turn him over, turn the Al Qaeda organisation over, destroy all of the terrorist camps - actually, we're doing a pretty good job of that right now (Bush 2001\_10\_14).*

The rule structure presented by the Bush administration was therefore essentially a choice between 'comply or die'. As Peter Singer has argued,

The intention behind the ultimatum was not to find a satisfactory solution to the problem, but to provide an excuse for going to war. War was not the last resort ... It was the most aggressive choice amongst a range of options that had never been adequately explored (2004: 151-2).

Moreover, the articulation of retributive justice, frontier justice and Just War theory embedded in the Bush administration's ideological-discursive formation, reduced the concept of justice to the raw exercise of coercive power. It mirrors the definition of justice presented by Thrasymachus in Plato's Republic; 'Justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger' (Plato 1997: 338c). The Bush administration's narrative embedded within it a deeply shallow definition of justice. Despite the moralistic crusade plot and grandiose use of moral terms, ultimately justice became a legitimising concept for the projection of American power in an attempt to establish a system of rule. This was certainly echoed in the manner in which the US responded to the attacks unilaterally, turning down UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's proposal for Security Council authorisation and only bringing NATO forces into the conflict after the campaign had ended and peacekeeping was necessary (Gurtov 2006: 59). This reflected the Bush administration's pre-9/11 preference for unilateralism as an approach to international affairs, but also demonstrated a reluctance to engage in alliance politics with partners that would not simply submit to US will in full. This was especially the case because the Bush administration wanted to use Afghanistan as an example to other regimes that opposed American power. The notion that the Bush administration wanted to make an example of al Qaeda and the Taliban was evident in assertions such as:

Let's hit them hard. *We want to signal this is a change from the past. We want to cause other countries like Syria and Iran to change their views. We want to hit as soon as possible* (in Woodward 2002: 98).

At the start of the campaign, President George W. Bush said, "We are at the beginning of our efforts in Afghanistan, but Afghanistan is only the beginning of our efforts in the world. This war will not end until terrorists with global reach have been found and stopped and defeated." You are the men and women who will *hand-carry that message to America's enemies, sealed with the muscle and might of the greatest warrior force on Earth* (Rumsfeld 2001\_11\_21).

Our military has a new and essential mission. For states that support terror, it's not enough that the consequences be costly - *they must be devastating. The more credible this reality, the more likely that regimes will change their behavior* - making it less likely that America and our friends will need to use overwhelming force against them (Bush 2001\_12\_11).

Instructively, this introduces the notion of deterrence into the Bush administration's approach. Moreover, it demonstrates in practise what candidate Bush meant by 'peace through strength'. Afghanistan presented an opportunity to enforce, and reinforce, a rule structure Bush established in the run up to the 2000 Presidential election:

My second goal is to build America's defenses on the troubled frontiers of technology and terror ... *Let me be clear. Our first line of defence is a simple message: Every group or nation must know, if they sponsor such [terrorist] attacks, our response will be devastating* (Bush 1999\_09\_23).

The events of 9/11 provided a situation where Afghanistan and its Taliban regime were to be made an example of, and Operation Enduring Freedom was to demonstrate to the world the consequences of challenging US power and failing to follow instructions given from Washington. It was in essence candidate Bush's 'Distinctly American Internationalism' put in practice. An attack on America had been carried out, and it was now time to demonstrate the consequences of invoking American preponderance so that others would not dare to attack or challenge American power. That this mission was carried out under the banner of 'Freedom', clearly demonstrates the extent to which preponderance and freedom became intertwined concepts.

The conduct of the Bush administration reflected a new rule structure that members of the administration sought to put in place. Similar to the sentiments of Elliot A. Cohen's '9/11 rules', the Bush administration's declaration that you are either 'with us or against us' created a dichotomy in which the US promised to 'help our friends, punish those who impede us, and annihilate those who attack us' (2001: 16). Once again this resembles Plato's Republic, but this time reflecting Polemarchus' notion that justice is 'to treat friends well and enemies badly' (Plato 1997: 332d). This language was not just for public consumption, it was used at the highest diplomatic levels. In General Pervez Musharraf's account, the President of Pakistan brought to power by a coup d'état in 1999, recalls Colin Powell telling him that 'you are either with us or against us'. Yet the nature of this threat became all the more evident when Richard Armitage added that if Pakistan chose to be on the side of terrorists, then they should be 'prepared to be bombed back to the Stone Age' (Musharraf 2006: 201).

In addition to dividing the world into a simplistic dichotomy and therefore establishing a rather simplistic rule structure for the other states to follow, the Bush administration sought to disembed itself from long established legal norms. This created a situation where the US was creating a rule structure that it alone was permitted to follow; a do as we say, not a do as we do, rule structure. This was certainly the logic presented by the Bush administration as it began to bypass laws and principles of legality. In the months after September 11, 2001, the US increasingly began to appeal to friendly regimes in the Middle East to cooperate with the CIA, in particular Egypt, Morocco, Syria and Jordan (Williams 2006: 124). The result of this was an expansion of America's willingness to pursue a policy of 'extraordinary rendition'. This extrajudicial practice, which started

under President Clinton<sup>113</sup>, was intensified as a result of the war on terror with J Cofer Black, the former head of the CIA's counter-terrorism centre, testifying that by late 2002 'there were at least 3,000 terrorist prisoners being held worldwide' (see Gray 2004). The procedure of 'rendering' terrorist suspects to third countries allowed US officials to bypass American laws prohibiting torture and the right of habeas corpus (see Mani 2003: 101). This established a policy of 'torture-by-proxy', in spite of US legislation passed in 1998, which codified that:

The policy of the United States not to expel, extradite, or otherwise effect the involuntary return of any person to a country in which there are substantial grounds for believing the person would be in danger of being subjected to torture, regardless of whether the person is physically present in the United States (in Williams 2006: 125).

However, in a recalled conversation with Bob Woodward, the President recollects telling Saudi Prince Bandar on the 13 September, 2001 that 'if we [the US] get somebody *and we can't get them to cooperate*, we'll hand them over to you' (Woodward 2006: 80). The logic of such a statement was clearly set out by former CIA agent Bob Baer's comments:

If you want a serious interrogation, you send a prisoner to Jordan. If you want them to be tortured, you send them to Syria. If you want someone to disappear - never to see them again - you send them to Egypt (in Gray 2004).

Clearly, within the articulation of justice presented by the Bush administration, and under the lexicon of security, domestic and international laws were seen to work against the sort of justice that the Bush administration wanted to deliver. Once again this action demonstrates the Bush administration's willingness to send a message to those that oppose American power,

the White House and the Department of Defense had adopted a policy of fighting terror with terror ... More so than other modes of torture, this type of contract crime may be ordered mainly for reasons of deterrence — i.e., to teach an object lesson to all people who fall afoul of the U.S., regardless of their national origin (Bix 2005).

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<sup>113</sup> See PDD39, Point Two: Deterring Terrorism (Clinton 1995).

The war in Afghanistan, in combination with the greatly expanded use of 'extraordinary rendition', therefore marked a point of acceleration in the Bush administration's desire to disembed itself from international institutions and international law. This created a situation where 'the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept' (Thucydides 1972: 401-2). This manifested itself with the Bush administration introducing new characters into the narrative, labelled 'unlawful enemy combatants' and 'battlefield detainees'. The introduction of these characterisations caused a deep public split within the administration, between the State Department on one side and the Defense Department and Vice President's office on another. Notably this divide concerned whether the Geneva Conventions applied to these characters. Despite this divide in the administration, it became clear that official policy favoured the Vice President's view that 'They don't meet the requirement of the laws of war' (Cheney 2002\_01\_27). The Vice President summed up the situation concisely when he argued that,

the legal question is, is there a category under the Geneva Convention for unlawful combatants, and one argument, the State Department argument, is, they ought to be treated within the Geneva Convention ... The other argument is, the Geneva Convention doesn't apply in the case of terrorism, and that leads you down a different track from a legal standpoint ... The ultimate result is, they will be treated humanely, but they are not going to be accorded the treatment you would accord, for example, the Iraqis that we captured in the Gulf War ... These are bad people. I mean, they've already been screened before they get to Guantanamo. They may well have information about future terrorist attacks against the United States. We need that information, we need to be able to interrogate them and extract from them whatever information they have (Cheney 2002\_01\_27).

Legal opinion on this issue has been divided. Indeed Geoffrey Roberts QC has argued that,

From the moment that America and its allies intervened on the side of the Northern Alliance in its civil war with the Taliban, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 applied, requiring treatment for all combatants who surrender and no punishment without some form of fair process (2006: 532).

However, what is interesting about the Vice President's statement, is that it sought to construct the US as a moral actor, by claiming that detainees will 'be treated humanely', and cast the US as working within legal boundaries, albeit 'down a different track from a legal standpoint'. What is clear from the statement is that habeas corpus had been suspended, as 'these are bad people', and that the US was now working with *rule by law* 'constructed by Bush lawyers' and not *rule of law* (see Robertson 2006: 537). In effect, the Bush administration had created a 'legal limbo' that it sought to legitimise around a specific characterisation of the enemy and a specific definition of justice articulated within its narrative.

In addition to the establishment of these 'new rules of the game', the war in Afghanistan also provided the Bush administration with important lessons on its path to the eventual institutionalisation of the Freedom Agenda. Primarily these lessons related to the use of the US military. As President Bush argued,

These past two months have shown that an innovative doctrine and high-tech weaponry can shape then dominate an unconventional conflict ... *our military are rewriting the rules of war* ... The conflict in Afghanistan has *taught us* more about the future of our military than a decade of blue ribbon panels and think-tank symposiums (Bush 2001\_12\_11).

In essence the President was arguing that the US had developed military supremacy through technological innovation, which was powerful, swift and effective enough to be projected across the world and achieve a desirable outcome. This certainly appeared to be the case as the Northern Alliance, with US support, was able to take the city of Mazar-e-Sharif by November 9, 2001, and then capture Kabul by November 12, 2001 (Katzman 2005: 9; Struck 2001). The rapid collapse of the Taliban regime vindicated the Rumsfeld-Franks strategy of combining the indigenous Northern Alliance with American



Special Forces and airpower (Call 2007: 25-41). This not only silenced critics, but fundamentally altered how the Bush administration viewed the strategically selective context; it altered what was seen as politically feasible, practical and desirable. No longer was the military seen as 'declining', which had been the position put forward in the 2000 presidential campaign. Rather, a military strategy had supposedly been constructed by the Pentagon and the CIA, which made fears of military overstretch redundant. The pessimistic declinism embedded in the administration's espoused ideological-discursive formation had been vanquished by swift military success. As a consequence, the triumphant exhilarance born out of the end of the Cold War became dominant. Afghanistan facilitated this roll, because the rapid success of the operation offered a low cost option of regime change, and provided a model for future military action (Woodward 2004: 5; 30; Dunn 2005: 18). In effect, the Afghanistan campaign, and subsequent rapid regime change, facilitated the conditions for the US to foster and narrate a new hubris, which helped the Bush administration dispel the myth of American weakness established as a result of the Vietnam War (Monten 2005: 153). The war in Afghanistan represented an anagnorisis moment in the narrative presented by the Bush administration:

When I committed U.S. forces to this battle, I had every confidence that they would be up to the task. And they have proven me right. The Taliban and the terrorists set out to dominate a country and intimidate the world. Today, from their caves, it's all looking a little different. And no cave is deep enough to escape the patient justice of the United States of America. We are also beginning to see the possibilities of a world beyond the war on terror. We have a chance, if we take it, to write a hopeful chapter in human history (Bush 2001\_12\_11).

Furthermore, this turning point was assimilated into the American exceptionalist narrative. Having removed the Taliban regime, the Bush administration now narrated the reasons for removing them as 'liberation', and defining the mission objectives as nation-building. It thus began to alter its narrative, assimilating the events into a privileged

genealogical past; for the Bush administration the war represented a continuation of America's democracy promotion tradition:

None of us would ever wish the evil that has been done to our country, yet we have learned that *out of evil can come great good* (Bush 2001\_11\_08).

*There's jubilation in the cities that we have liberated. And the sooner al Qaeda is brought to justice, the sooner Afghanistan will return to normal*<sup>114</sup> (Bush 2001\_11\_19).

Part of that cause was to *liberate the Afghan people from terrorist occupation*, and we did so. Next week, the schools reopen in Afghanistan. They will be open to all - and many young girls will go to school for the first time in their young lives ... *In Kabul, a friendly government is now an essential member of the coalition against terror* (Bush 2002\_03\_11).

The first phase of our military operation was in Afghanistan ... *You've got to understand that as we routed out the Taliban, they weren't sent in to conquer; they were sent in to liberate ... America seeks hope and opportunity for all people in all cultures. And that is why we're helping to rebuild Afghanistan ... The Marshall Plan, rebuilding Europe and lifting up former enemies, showed that America is not content with military victory alone. Americans always see a greater hope and a better day. And America sees a just and hopeful world beyond the war on terror ... by your effort and example, you will advance the cause of freedom around the world* (Bush 2002\_04\_17).

That the war in Afghanistan was now being constructed as a “war of liberation”, is instructive. It demonstrates how the projection of American power, which in part had the objective of deterrence, could be assimilated into the rubric of democracy promotion and liberation. That is to say, the two discourses, and objectives, could coexist within an ideological-discursive formation. The concept of justice consequently came to legitimise a nation-building project under the banner of “freedom”, whilst also legitimising anti-democratic practices, such as indefinite detention, torture and targeted assassinations, as the Bush administration travelled down the path of rule *by law*. This proved to be a critical dynamic in the evolution of the Freedom Agenda, which posited both American primacy and the democratisation of the Middle East.

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<sup>114</sup> That the President used the term “normal” is indicative of his stance that democracy is the natural structure any state would adopt once tyranny was removed. Yet given Afghanistan's history “normal” was certainly not a democratic system.

Moreover, with the removal of the Taliban regime, under the banner of justice and peace, the Bush administration was now characterising US military intervention as strong, resolute, credible, anti-imperialistic and able to deliver a nation to freedom. Yet, by dispelling the myth of American weakness a fundamental shift in the power structure of the United States corporate bureaucracy occurred. No longer was Colin Powell's State Department seen as the key institution with regard to foreign policy in the MENA region, the door had been opened for other strategically selective actors in the state system to reassert themselves. The military success created a shift in power from the State Department, and was increasingly being accrued by Pentagon officials and the Vice President's Office, which laid the foundations for 'phase two' of the administration's moralistic crusade in Iraq and the institutionalisation of the Freedom Agenda. America was now unbound and dominated by officials inclined to use military power to reshape the Middle East in its image.

### **Prong Two of this Moral Crusade: Iraq and the Birth of the Freedom Agenda**

The decision to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003 has generated a considerable level of debate and confusion around the world. Moreover, events in Iraq have done little to relieve the original sense of puzzlement concerning why the Bush administration included Iraq as a target in the war on terrorism. This was most instructively demonstrated when Richard N. Haass, the former director of the Policy-Planning Staff at the State Department and President of the *Council on Foreign Relations*, was asked why President Bush had decided to go to war? He replied,

I will go to my grave not knowing that ... I can't answer it. I can't explain the strategic obsession with Iraq — why it rose to the top of people's priority list. I just can't explain why so many people thought this was so important to do (in Lemann 2004: 157).

This is a sentiment Haass would repeat in his memoir of both the Iraq wars in 1991 and 2003, entitled *War of Necessity; War of Choice*. Haass points out that the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was not the product of a definitive moment in which principles met to discuss the pros and cons of the invasion before a final decision was made. Rather, the decision was the product of a cumulative process (Haass 2009: 234). To the extent that Haass does offer a modicum of an explanation, he argues that,

[A]fter 9/11, the president and those closest to him wanted to send a message to the world that the United States was willing and able to act decisively. Liberating Afghanistan was a start, but in the end it didn't scratch the itch. Americans had no long standing history of feud with Afghanistan ... Iraq was fundamentally different. The President wanted to destroy an established nemesis of the United States. And he wanted to change the course of history, transforming not just a country but the region of the world that had produced the lion's share of the world's terrorists and had resisted much of modernity (2009: 234-5).

This explanation is one that many academics and political commentators have put forward (Bacevich 2008: 59-60; Lieven and Hulsman 2006; Traub 2008: 118-9; Monten 2005; Jervis 2003). Embedded in this explanation is an answer as to why the Freedom Agenda emerged; it was, in conjunction with the Iraq war, an attempt to transform the Middle East with the aim of countering terrorism and delivering 'modernity'. However, such a position is not without its critics. Tamara Cofman Wittes, in her sustained and highly detailed account of the Freedom Agenda, *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy*, excludes any analysis of Iraq arguing that,

[I]n the public discourse both in the United States and abroad, the Bush administration's policy of advancing Middle Eastern democracy is inextricably linked to the war in Iraq. Yet this conflation misunderstands both the Iraq war and Bush's policy of democracy promotion. Humanitarian intervention to topple a brutal dictatorship was a distant third among rationales put forward by the Bush administration and its allies for the invasion; the primary arguments had to do with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, both past and presumed, and its alleged links to terrorist groups. Hope that Saddam's fall would produce a democratic "domino effect" in the region was expressed by the president and other senior officials as a hope, and not as a war aim. The United States would not have gone to war simply to create a democracy in Iraq, absent what was then viewed as a

compelling security rationale<sup>115</sup> (2008b: 8-9).

In a personal interview with Wittes at the Brookings Institute, she expanded this argument by asserting that,

there is a difference between what was going on in his [President Bush's] mind, what was motivating his policy preferences, and what was being marketed to the American public, what was being marketed to the world community and what this war was about ... I have no idea what was going on in the man's mind ... But the marketing of the war was number one WMD, number two links to terrorism, number three humanitarian intervention. And you know I think you have to look at it again in terms of practice ... If the core motivation of Iraq was to set up a democracy and create this domino effect then the military implementation would have looked very different, because, you don't create a democracy with that kind of post-invasion force structure. And so if the President were whole-heartedly committed to setting up a democracy in Iraq that would create this domino impact throughout the region, he would have; we shouldn't assume. One would presume that at some point during the process when he and his advisers were being briefed on the military planning for the war, [President Bush] would have said how are we going to create a democracy afterwards? There is no evidence in anything that has been written so far about the planning for the war that that question was ever asked (Wittes 2008c).

Evidently, there is a clear divergence of opinion between proponents that view the relationship between the Iraq War and the Freedom Agenda as constituting a logic of equivalence, and those that articulate a logic of difference. Moreover, it is clear from the two positions that the relationship between the Iraq war and the Freedom Agenda requires an analysis of the period leading up to the Iraq war. Instructively, the constructivist institutionalist methodology driving this research can shed light on this issue by continuing with a process-tracing narrative analysis. However, before doing so it is fruitful to analyse Wittes' objections to viewing the Iraq war as part of the Freedom Agenda, because a considerable amount hinges on understanding their relationship.

Notably Wittes' argument rests on a distinction between 'the president's mind',

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<sup>115</sup> It is interesting to note that Wittes' assertion is contradicted by Strobe Talbott's Foreword in the very same book, in which he argues that 'Bush's Freedom Agenda faltered in the Arab world because of the instability unleashed by the invasion in Iraq. But the administration also failed to take account of risks to American interests and let itself be lulled into believing that the toppling of a tyrant in Baghdad would vindicate a benign version of the domino theory throughout the region' (2008: x).

‘motivating the policy’ and what was ‘being marketed to the American public’. In essence, there is a distinction being made between the psychological motivation of the Iraq policy and the public presentation justifying the invasion. Indeed, Wittes’ argument asserts that the latter takes priority, and therefore the Iraq policy and the Freedom Agenda can be deemed exclusive from one another. To conflate the two policies is to ‘misunderstand’ them. At a theoretical level, this argument is problematic; not least because it suggests that ideas providing the reason for strategically selective agents to act, are analytically subservient to a policy analysis based on the list of motives provided in the political game [notably absent of an analysis of any larger plot they are framed within]. This is a peculiar assertion, not least because if it was accepted that there is a distinction between why agents say they act over the ideas that guide them, Wittes prioritises the former over the latter. Moreover, even when ‘humanitarian’ reasons are asserted as a reason for action, because they are ‘a distant third’, they are disregarded. Not only is such a position logically suspicious, as it is not entirely obvious that humanitarian intervention and democracy promotion are the same thing, but there appears to be a considerable amount of gerrymandering to construct a logic of difference between the Iraq war and the Freedom Agenda.

Wittes’ argument is also deeply problematic at an empirical level. The Bush administration made it very clear before the invasion of Iraq, that the first step towards democracy would be the removal of Saddam Hussein. As Marina Ottaway argues, ‘President Bush and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice ... stated on more than one occasion that change in Iraq would lead to a far-reaching transformation of the entire region’ (2005: 178). In an interview with the *Financial Times* on September 23, 2002, Rice explicitly claimed that the US would be ‘completely devoted’ to democratising Iraq in the event of an invasion and that democratisation would not ‘stop at the edge of Islam’.

Further still, Rice asserted that the US had a commitment to the ‘democratisation or the march of freedom in the Muslim world’ (Harding, Wolffe, and Blitz 2002). Rice’s assertion was echoed by the President, when he asserted that,

*If we meet our responsibilities, if we overcome this danger, we can arrive at a very different future. The people of Iraq can shake off their captivity ... inspiring reforms throughout the Muslim world. These nations can show by their example that honest government, and respect for women, and the great Islamic tradition of learning can triumph in the Middle East and beyond* (Bush 2002\_09\_12).

*The current Iraqi regime has shown the power of tyranny to spread discord and violence in the Middle East. A liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region, by bringing hope and progress into the lives of millions. America's interests in security, and America's belief in liberty, both lead in the same direction: to a free and peaceful Iraq ... A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region* (Bush 2003\_02\_26).

This demonstrates that within the narrative presented by the Bush administration there was a vision of the future that made a commitment to democracy in Iraq, and that this would act as an exemplar for the rest of the region. Far from being a ‘hope’, as Wittes argues, it was portrayed definitively as a ‘very different future’; the utopian ending of the moral crusade plot that was juxtaposed with a possible dystopia resulting from terrorists possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It was with this utopian ending of the moral crusade in mind, that the President met with Iraqi exiles to discuss post-invasion democratisation on January 10, 2003. Similarly, in a NSC meeting on February 14, 2003, when considering what would happen if a coup to replace Saddam with another dictatorship occurred, the President made it clear that he would insist on authority being turned over to a publicly supported Iraqi authority to ensure some movement towards democracy (in Woodward 2004: 258; 315; also see Bush 2003\_02\_26). Such occurrences provide evidence that explicitly contradicts Wittes’ insistence that democracy was an afterthought. As Dick Cheney said of the president, ‘Democracy in the Middle East is just a big deal for him. It’s what’s driving him’ (in Woodward 2004: 412).

Consequently, far from viewing the Freedom Agenda and the Iraq war as distinct entities, the Bush administration itself portrayed these two policies as part of the same vision, as a combined strategy for delivering ‘freedom’ throughout the entire MENA region. Given that the Iraq war and the Freedom Agenda were part of the same narrative presented by the Bush administration, and indeed articulated together as part of a broader goal, it would appear that under Wittes’ criteria the Bush administration ‘misunderstood’ its own policy. Given the absurdity of this situation, it is more fruitful to focus on the narrative presented by the Bush administration. By doing so it is evident that the centrepiece of the Bush administration’s ideological vision of the Middle East began with attacking Iraq. In the belief that America had unprecedented power to wield, Iraq was seen as the route through which to transform the entire region. Unlike the Clinton administration that believed peace was achievable through solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Bush administration viewed regional transformation achievable through the removal of Saddam Hussein (see Indyk 2002). This was evident in the decoupling strategy outlined in the first NSC meeting in February 2001<sup>116</sup>, and became all the more prominent after the September 2001 terrorist attacks.

This is not to suggest that Wittes is incorrect about there being a ‘security rationale’ for the war. Many commentators have argued that had the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 not occurred, ‘Iraq would likely have remained a secondary issue in American foreign policy’ (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 129). This certainly appears to be the case, as it was in the days and months after the crisis of September 11, 2001 that the Bush administration turned its attention to Iraq and a military invasion to force regime change. Following what appeared to be a swift military success in Afghanistan, the President asked Donald Rumsfeld to turn his attention to Iraq for an assessment of possible military

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<sup>116</sup> See chapter eight and table five.



options on November 21, 2001 (Woodward 2004: 30). For many commentators this was seen as a product of Dick Cheney adopting the role of ‘examiner of worst case scenarios’ in which he had to ‘think about the unthinkable’ (Woodward 2004: 29).

Cheney’s new role within the administration was to focus on WMD being used by terrorists against the United States. The fear of such an occurrence was compounded by intelligence gathered before September 11, 2001, which appeared to show Osama bin Laden meeting with Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood in Kandahar. This meeting was of great significance, as Mahmood was the former chairman of Pakistan’s Atomic Energy Commission and an expert in uranium enrichment (Suskind 2006: 27; Overbye and Glanz 2001). In light of the events of September 11, 2001, this meeting was interpreted as a ‘nightmare’ by George Tenet and consequently presented to Dick Cheney and other principals of the US intelligence community. The result of this meeting was dramatic, as it provided the first articulation of what Pulitzer Prize winner Ron Suskind termed *The One Percent Doctrine*. Suskind quotes the Vice President’s assertion that,

If there’s a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response...It’s not about analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence ... It’s about our response (2006: 62).

This was an extraordinary assertion, which fundamentally altered the rules of the game. No longer was policy to be evidence led, but rather a dichotomy had been constructed between analysis and action. This disarticulation created a scenario where the *possible* was to be deemed more important to strategic policy action than the *probable*. Within such a context the causes for action fundamentally changed, as the strategically selective actors viewed the strategically selective context differently. Ultimately, policy became heavily reliant on the productive imagination, which in turn became embedded in the Bush administration’s narrative through semantic innovation. The consequences of this

were highly apparent to Sir Richard Dearlove, head of the UK intelligence agency MI6, who briefed Prime Minister Blair nine months before the invasion commenced in Iraq. In his assessment he argued that war was 'inevitable' and that 'the facts and intelligence' were being 'fixed round the policy' by the Bush administration (Rycroft 2005; Fielding 2005).

Instructively, the Bush administration was concerned about possible links between WMD and 'terrorism' before September 11, 2001. The administration framed its argument for withdrawing from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, by arguing that it was concerned about the link between 'missiles and terror' and the possibility of 'attack and blackmail' (Bush 1999\_09\_23). The need for a Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) shield was marketed as necessary in maintaining US primacy and preventing the perceived threat from 'rogue nations' willing to 'blackmail', 'threaten' or 'attack'. The importance of this discursive structure is that it was a readily available discourse that was iteratively, yet cumulatively expanded after the September 11, 2001 attacks. In particular this discourse was assimilated into the Bush administration's moralistic crusade plot in light of the anthrax attacks that followed September 11:

*We have faced unprecedented bioterrorist attacks delivered in our mail ... And tonight, we join in thanking a whole new group of public servants who never enlisted to fight a war, but find themselves on the front lines of a battle nonetheless: Those who deliver the mail - America's postal workers. We also thank those whose quick response provided preventive treatment that has no doubt saved thousands of lives - our health care workers ... The first attack against America came by plane ... The second attack against America came in the mail (Bush 2001\_11\_08).*

*America's next priority to prevent mass terror is to protect against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them ... One former al Qaida member has testified in court that he was involved in an effort 10 years ago to obtain nuclear materials. And the leader of al Qaida calls that effort "a religious duty." Abandoned al Qaida houses in Kabul contained diagrams for crude weapons of mass destruction. And as we all know, terrorists have put anthrax into the U.S. mail ... And almost every state that actively sponsors terror*

*is known to be seeking weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them at longer and longer ranges.* Their hope is to blackmail the United States into abandoning our war on terror (Bush 2001\_12\_11).

The anthrax attacks provided a physical incarnation of ‘terrorists’ using WMD on American soil. Thus, although the origin of the attacks was unknown<sup>117</sup>, they were articulated as a ‘second wave’, a phrase which alludes to causality on the basis of succession in time. This created a *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy rooted in a conflation between the ‘terrorists’ that carried out the September 11, 2001 attacks and the ‘terrorists’ that sent anthrax in the postal system (see Egan 2002; Vulliamy 2002). Through doing this, the Bush administration was able to reify an association of ideas between WMD and terrorism, and sell this as an immediate threat to the American populous. This was an audience that no longer thought in the abstract of such attacks, but rather through collective fear had ‘experienced’ the attacks and readily interpellated. As a direct consequence, US counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation policies were increasingly portrayed in synergy as the Bush administration’s narrative amalgamated them together.

The linguistic embodiment of such an amalgamation was delivered through phrases such as ‘mass terror’, ‘catastrophic harm’, ‘catastrophic terrorist violence’, ‘turn their hatred into holocaust’, ‘technologies to kill on a massive scale’, ‘massive and sudden horror’, ‘maximum death and destruction’, and ‘unprecedented dangers’. This list is by no means complete, but rather provides a sample of the language used to represent the alleged danger facing the US. This tendency to inflate danger was evident during the anthrax attacks, when the Bush administration portrayed them as threatening ‘thousands of lives’, rather than the five deaths and fifteen sicknesses that actually resulted from the

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<sup>117</sup> It was not until August 2008 that these attacks were attributed to the US Army biological researcher Bruce Ivins (Bohn, Mears, and Fiegel 2008).

attacks (Bohn, Mears, and Fiegel 2008). The propensity to inflate threat was increasingly utilised and assimilated within the Bush administration's 'war on terror' narrative. As a consequence the characterisation of the 'enemy' began to undergo a process of metamorphosis. Claims were increasingly made concerning terrorism and the use of WMD:

These same terrorists are searching for weapons of mass destruction, the tools to turn their hatred into holocaust. They can be expected to use chemical, biological and nuclear weapons the moment they are capable of doing so ... We face enemies that hate not our policies, but our existence (Bush 2001\_11\_10).

[S]ome states that sponsor terror are seeking or already possess weapons of mass destruction; terrorist groups are hungry for these weapons, and would use them without a hint of conscience. And we know that these weapons, in the hands of terrorists, would unleash blackmail and genocide and chaos. These facts cannot be denied, and must be confronted (Bush 2002\_03\_11).

Our adversaries have now shown their willingness to slaughter thousands of innocent civilians in a devastating strike. If they had the capacity to kill millions of innocent civilians, do any of us believe they would hesitate to do so? (Wolfowitz 2002\_10\_04).

We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud ... The single most important lesson that I've learned is that ... that you will be surprised, particularly in this world, with terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, at how much damage can be done by a few people; and that you should not wait to be surprised by evil people who may wish you real harm with weapons of mass destruction that would make September 11 look small in comparison ... We're in a new world. We're in a world in which the possibility of terrorism, married up with technology, could make us very, very sorry that we didn't act (Rice 2002\_09\_08).

Highly observable in these quotes is the manner in which the characterisation of the enemy changed from merely 'evil terrorists' to a triad of 'terrorists, WMD and rogue states' (see Dunn 2005). This was accompanied by a narration of a possible future which was not only apocalyptic, but a dystopia where the 'American way of life', 'civilization' and 'freedom' were destroyed and 'fear', 'evil' and 'tyranny' replaced them. This imagined future was seen as a possibility because, as the Bush administration argued, there were 'evil states' and 'evil terrorists' working together to challenge and destroy the United States with WMD. The triad constructed by the Bush administration conflated an

essentialised nature in the moral realist term of ‘evil’:

Our second goal is to prevent regimes 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 ... [and] Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror ... *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 ... States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil (Bush 2002\_01\_29).

Terror cells and outlaw regimes building weapons of mass destruction are different faces of the same evil. Our security requires that we confront both. (Bush 2002\_10\_07).

Evidently, the Bush administration’s narrative continued along the plot of a moralistic crusade. However, by expanding the characterisation of the enemy to an essentialised ‘evil’ triad, the Bush administration began reforming the boundaries of what constituted the national interest and how to pursue it. The original response to the war on terror was abstractly defined as ‘ridding the world of evil’ and defeating ‘every terrorist group of global reach’ (Bush 2001\_09\_20). However, by late 2001 this had changed, and now the national interest was expanded to dealing with terrorism and proliferation, through ‘pre-emptive’ force, to ‘prevent mass terror’ and the ‘proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them’ (Bush 2001\_12\_11). Problematically, this distinction would be written out of the official narrative as the President began claiming that the objective was ‘always the same’ (Bush 2002\_04\_17).

This shift in the construction of the national interest is fundamentally important to understanding the evolution of the Freedom Agenda. Where as the moralistic crusade in Afghanistan was conducted under the banner of Just War theory, the build-up to the Iraq war was constructed as a prudent measure, given the possibility of ‘mass terror’. However, whilst the administration was focusing on ‘mass terror’, it also began to focus

on the MENA region more broadly. On November 29, 2001, the issue of Iraq and the idea of democratising the Middle East began to be developed as two distinct, but conjunctive, ideas. This was the result of Donald Rumsfeld asking Paul Wolfowitz to bring together scholars from the *American Enterprise Institute* (AEI) and *John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies* (SAIS) (Rumsfeld 2006\_07\_06). This meeting, which Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld's consultant Steve Herbits termed "Bletchley II"<sup>118</sup>, was called together to answer broader questions that the Pentagon was unable to answer, such as 'Who are the terrorists? Where did this come from? How does it relate to Islamic history, the history of the Middle East, and contemporary Middle East tensions? What are we up against here?' (Woodward 2006: 83).

The goal of this meeting was to construct post-9/11 policy towards the Middle East<sup>119</sup>, which would be drawn up as a memo and circulated around the Bush administration (see Bosman 2006). Although this memo remains classified, what little information is available is highly revealing. The title of the memo was *Delta of Terrorism*. Significantly, the metaphor of a *delta* was chosen to conjure images of the mouth of a river from which terrorism flows from the entire MENA region. According to Christopher DeMuth, an instrumental actor in the meeting,

the general analysis was that Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where most of the hijackers came from, were the key, but the problems there are intractable. Iran is more important, where they were confident and successful in setting up a radical

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<sup>118</sup> The name 'Bletchley II' was chosen because Wolfowitz wanted to create something akin to the Bletchley Park meeting in World War II, where a team of mathematicians and cryptologists was set up to try and break German communication codes.

<sup>119</sup> Attending on the proviso that the meeting be kept secret, a group of academics assembled in a secured conference centre in Virginia. The attendees included Christopher DeMuth, President of the AEI; Bernard Lewis, a close friend of Dick Cheney and scholar on Islam; Mark Palmer, the former US ambassador to Hungary who would later be instrumental in authoring the *ADVANCE Democracy Act of 2007*; Fareed Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek International* and author of *The Future of Freedom*, that sets out the case for the US supporting the democratization of the Middle East (2004: 150-9); Fouad Ajami, friend of Condoleezza Rice, director of the Middle East Center at SAIS and author of *The Arab Predicament*; James Q. Wilson, former President of the *American Political Science Association*, specialising in morality and crime; and Reuel Marc Gerecht, senior fellow at the *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, former CIA Middle East expert and former director of the *Project for the New American Century's* Middle East initiative.

government ... We concluded that a confrontation with Saddam was inevitable. He was a gathering threat - the most menacing, active and unavoidable threat. We agreed that Saddam would have to leave the scene before the problem would be addressed (in Woodward 2006: 84-5).

DeMuth's description of the meeting's conclusion is instructive as it put forward a wide ranging plan for US-MENA relations. Countries that were deemed important to long term national interests, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, were highlighted as important to transforming the region, but as part of a gradual process resulting from the removal of Saddam Hussein. Iran was believed to be a threat, but too difficult to deal with. Consequently, Saddam Hussein was seen as an easier, more vulnerable target that could be removed. At the meeting Baathism was seen as 'an Arab form of fascism transplanted to Iraq' and that the Bush administration should consider itself 'facing a two-generation war' starting 'with Iraq'. This, it was believed, would be 'the only way to transform the region' (Woodward 2006: 83-5).

This memo certainly proved to be a tipping point for many in the administration, as it provided a broad vision for how to deal with the MENA region. When the memo was hand delivered to members of Bush's war cabinet, Rice said that the memo was 'very, very persuasive', Cheney was 'pleased with the memo' and the President was now focused on the 'malignancy' of the Middle East (Woodward 2006: 85). Moreover, the memo reveals an important chain of events. Firstly, that the notion of invading Iraq was set in motion before any conception of its wider impact on transforming the region. However, within less than a fortnight after the President asked Donald Rumsfeld to look into invading Iraq, a much wider plan was being established that would transform the region starting with an invasion of Iraq. This was the ideational birth of a liberal grand strategy for democratising the MENA region. Consequently, it is possible to concur with Andrew Bacevich's assessment of the situation,

[T]hrough a war of liberation, the United States intended to convert Iraq into what Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz termed “the first Arab democracy”. Yet, as they prepared for a final showdown with Saddam, Wolfowitz and others in the administration were already looking beyond Baghdad ... The ultimate aim of the strategy was nothing less than “to remake the world” or at least what the administration referred to as the Greater Middle East. Here was an imperial vision on a truly colossal scale, a worthy successor to older claims of “manifest destiny” ... President Bush’s “freedom agenda” updated and expanded upon this tradition (2008: 59-60; Also see Lieven and Hulsman 2006; Traub 2008: 118-9; Monten 2005; Jervis 2003).

Understanding the relationship between the Freedom Agenda and the Iraq war as two separate but reinforcing policies, which were guided by the same grand vision for the MENA, allows a more cogent appreciation of why the President’s narrative asserted the importance of Iraq for transforming the region. Evident in the Bush administration’s appeals that Iraq would become an exemplar for the region, was an appeal to ‘domino theory’. As a dominant metaphor throughout the Cold War, the theory resonates with the American public and is widely understood; the fall of one country to an ideology would stimulate the fall of those adjacent to it. However, in the post-Cold War era where the exuberance of victory has led to claims of the ‘end of history’ in which the United States stands vindicated as the sole remaining superpower, the Bush administration sought to deploy the metaphor for inspirational purposes; push Baghdad and ‘unfriendly tyrannies’ in the MENA will fall with it.

From the view of those within the higher echelons of the Bush administration there appeared only one direction that the dominos would fall. As Paul Wolfowitz explained “‘Export of democracy’ isn’t really a good phrase ... we’re trying to remove the shackles on democracy’ (in Smith 2007). This was coupled with Dick Cheney’s claims that ‘after liberation, the streets in Basra and Baghdad are sure to erupt in joy in the same way throngs in Kabul greeted the Americans’ (in Lockman 2004: 251). In the Bush administration’s espoused narrative, it was highly evident that democracy was seen as the



‘natural’ order a society would adopt; if tyranny was removed democracy would surely follow. At the ‘end of history’ where liberal democracy is the ‘final form of human government’ and the teleological ‘end point of mankind’s [sic] ideological evolution’, what other way could Iraq and the rest of the MENA region fall? This established one of the most ideological premises of the Bush administration’s vision for the future of the Middle East; if Iraq could be emancipated from Saddam Hussein it would become a pro-American bastion of freedom in the region. As such, it was believed that it would provide a ‘model’ for pro-American forces in the region to rise up and demand similar levels of democracy and freedom. This was, as John Lewis Gaddis declared, a formula of ‘Fukuyama plus force’ (2004: 90). However, as events in Iraq began to challenge the Bush administration’s teleological understanding of history, demonstrating problems within the administration’s ideological-discursive formation, the Freedom Agenda policy would come to evolve as a distinct policy in and of itself.

## **10. The Failing Plot and the Evolution of the Freedom Agenda; Ideological Struggle and an Overarching Rationale**

By understanding the Iraq war and the Freedom Agenda as part of a grand vision for the MENA region, articulated together by the vision set out at “Bletchley II”, it is possible to trace the gradual evolution of the Freedom Agenda. Yet, just as the Iraq war was a point of origin for the implementation of the Freedom Agenda, it would also serve as a point of departure, as the policy evolved into a distinctive policy in and of itself. This chapter underscores this point by detailing how the Freedom Agenda began to be institutionalised and defined by its own security imperatives and rationale. This chapter details how ideas came to be reified and institutionalised throughout 2002 until the end of the Bush administration’s tenure in office. The initiation of the Freedom Agenda was therefore a considerable amount of time before being formally declared the main leitmotif of Bush’s second term in office, and before the 2003 Iraq war. Unlike previous accounts of the Freedom Agenda, which fail to trace the evolution of the policy or simply asserted that the policy was a post-hoc justification for the Iraq war, this analysis demonstrates that this is not the case. Rather, a more scrupulous interpretation of events demonstrates that the Freedom Agenda came into fruition through a slow gestation of ideas. This became all the more apparent throughout the end of 2002 when long term MENA allies, such as Egypt, began facing increasing pressure from the administration to reform. However, what distinguishes this period is the manner in which, firstly, the Bush administration began to shift the definition of the national interest from ‘eradicating terrorism’ and using ‘pre-emptive’ force, to ‘prevent mass terror’ by addressing wider social conditions in the MENA. What emerged in its place was a definition of the national interest that sought to deal with what the administration saw to be the causes of terrorism. The Freedom Agenda in its final evolutionary form is the product of this shift.

## **Reifying the Freedom Agenda: Universal Values and a Single Sustainable Model**

The initial signs that the Bush administration's post-crisis narrative was evolving to include a more prescriptive approach to dealing with the causes of terrorism came before the Iraq war. It is important to recognise that, before the Iraq war, the President declared to West Point candidates, that

the 20th century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance. America cannot impose this vision - yet we can support and reward governments that make the right choices for their own people ... A truly strong nation will permit legal avenues of dissent for all groups that pursue their aspirations without violence. An advancing nation will pursue economic reform, to unleash the great entrepreneurial energy of its people. A thriving nation will respect the rights of women, because no society can prosper while denying opportunity to half its citizens. Mothers and fathers and children across the Islamic world, and all the world, share the same fears and aspirations. In poverty, they struggle. In tyranny, they suffer. And as we saw in Afghanistan, in liberation they celebrate (Bush 2002\_06\_01).

These sentiments were repeated in the *National Security Strategy* published in September 2002. Such assertions represented an evolutionary step in the moral crusade plot presented by the administration. In narrating a future utopian vision 'beyond the war on terror', the President asserted the need to confront 'poverty' and 'tyranny' by supporting and rewarding 'governments that make the right choices for their own people'. This was to be done by countries adopting the 'single surviving model of human progress'. Such a statement is notable for its teleological understanding of 'progress' towards a single vision, and the prescription of democratisation as a solution to terrorism. This added a much more complex understanding of how to 'fight' the 'war on terror' than had been initially constructed.

The implications of this statement became all the more evident in US-MENA relations. Chiefly, US-Egyptian relations were symptomatic of the coming problems that would

prove highly problematic for the Freedom Agenda when formally institutionalised. On June 8, 2002, President Bush held a joint press conference with President Mubarak in which he would thank Egypt for its ‘strong support in our war against terror’, claiming that ‘we’ve got a good friend, Americans have a good friend, when it comes to this war on terror, in Egypt’ (Bush 2002\_06\_08). However, by August 2002 the White House refused to honour an Egyptian request for \$130 million in supplementary aid. This was a direct protest against the July sentencing of prominent Egyptian-American democracy activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim and his colleagues for apparent fraud and defamation. This was the first time the US had linked the provision of aid to a human rights case in the Arab world (Hawthorne 2003a: 23). As the Bush administration became increasingly concerned by the internal politics of regimes it regarded as allies, tensions began to rise to the surface. This saw the creeping insurrection of the ‘conflict of interests’ problem which slowly began to ferment in US-MENA relations.

Within the early evolutionary phase of the Freedom Agenda, it became abundantly clear that the Bush administration was asserting the need to promote ‘freedom’ in the region, but that the narrative failed to provide a robust and consistent understanding of why this applied to the entire region. Consequently, it failed to set out a strategy other than deploying the ‘domino’ metaphor. This became all the more evident when the Bush administration began re-engaging in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, seeking an end to the second Intifada. Indeed, President Bush argued that,

if liberty can blossom in the rocky soil of the West Bank and Gaza, it will inspire millions of men and women around the globe who are equally weary of poverty and oppression, equally entitled to the benefits of democratic government (Bush 2002\_06\_24).

This vision was narrated as the end point of the President’s proposed two-state solution, which would be supported if ‘a new and different Palestinian leadership’ was elected.

Evidently, Washington wanted 'regime change' in the Palestinian Authority, and argued that this would allow 'democratic reforms' to move forward (Bush 2002\_06\_24).

Removing Arafat had now become US policy in an effort to restart negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis; later culminating in the 'Road Map' (see Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 199-228; Hudson 2005). In addition to the 'domino effect' however, Flynt Leverett describes a more parsimonious reason for the Bush administration wanting to create a democratic Palestinian state. In what he calls the 'garbage-collection model', he argues that supporters of a democratic Palestine within the administration, assumed that

Palestinians and their sympathizers in the Arab and Muslim worlds don't really care that much about Palestinians living under occupation, that Palestinian and other Arab leaders use Israel as a convenient way to deflect popular attention from their own performance. I myself heard President Bush argue in the White House Situation Room, that a democratically-elected Palestinian government would be more focused on collecting garbage, and less, quote unquote, "hung up" on territory and the status of Jerusalem (IQ2 2007).

Such stark terms were not used publicly as part of the war on terror narrative. However, this mode of thought was alluded to when the Bush administration increasingly began to refer to 'Freedom' as a 'universal value'.

Prosperity and freedom and dignity are not just American hopes, or Western hopes. *They are universal, human hopes.* And even in the violence and turmoil of the Middle East, America believes *those hopes have the power to transform lives and nations* (Bush 2002\_06\_24).

Such claims have strong American exceptionalist resonance. No clearer statement of this can be made than the President's assertion that,

Americans are a free people, who know that *freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity* (Bush 2003\_01\_28).

That 'freedom' was 'God's gift to humanity' was an articulation that was often deployed

to legitimise the Freedom Agenda. Without a coherent rationale or strategy in place, the phrasing legitimises the Freedom Agenda by implying that God demands such a policy. Not only does it provide a sense of moral mission, but it places god on America's side in that mission. To promote freedom is to do God's altruistic work, and consequently, human actions imitate God's will whilst building a utopia on earth. Evidently, through rationalising the policy in these transcendental terms the Bush administration was attempting to maintain the overall plot of the war on terror as a moral crusade, whilst silencing critics<sup>120</sup>.

This transcendental argument, derived from an American exceptionalist discourse, underpinned the Freedom Agenda's social engineering project. This was social utopianism par excellence. As Donald Rumsfeld had explained,

we have a choice, either to change the way we live, which is unacceptable, or to change the way that they live ... we chose the latter (Rumsfeld 2001\_09\_18).

Yet, failure to assert a coherent rationale proved highly problematic for the Freedom Agenda throughout the early phase of its evolution. At the launch of MEPI in December 2002, Colin Powell argued that focusing on development would fill the 'hope gap' in the region and that,

[U]ntil the countries of the Middle East unleash the abilities and potential of their women, they will not build a future of hope. Any approach to the Middle East that ignores its political, economic, and educational underdevelopment will be built on sand (Powell 2002\_12\_12).

But, with only an initial budget of \$29 million, this was derided in the region as tokenism (Sharp 2005b: 3). That the cumulative total of MEPI funding was \$497.7 million by FY2008 was symptomatic of the fact that the monumental goal of transforming the

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<sup>120</sup> Indeed this was certainly the sentiment behind Donald Rumsfeld quoting the Bible on the front of his briefing papers for the President. Pertinent to this point was quoting the First Epistle of Peter 'It is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men' (BBC 2009).

conditions in the region were never met with a sufficient proportion of means<sup>121</sup> (see Hawthorne 2003b). For example, if the cumulative total of MEPI funding by FY2008 was divided equally between the sixteen countries it targeted, it amounted to only \$31.1 million for each country over seven years. With only \$4.4 million per annum for each country, MEPI can hardly be seen as a ‘revolutionary’ or a ‘tectonic shift’ in US foreign policy<sup>122</sup>. This fact was not lost on US officials that increasingly argued that MEPI represented a ‘philosophical commitment’ towards reforming the region (Sharp 2005b: 3). Accordingly, as the administration tried to justify its position, claiming that this was a strategy of ‘partnerships’ and ‘principle’ (Powell 2004), it became all the more evident that the Freedom Agenda was not a direct challenge to MENA allies. Rather, the Freedom Agenda’s intended purpose was to work with regional allies, in ‘partnerships’, to try and alleviate the social conditions that were undermining their legitimacy.

### **The Freedom Agenda as the Overarching Rationale: The Impact of the Iraq War and the Rise of the Freedom Agenda**

Whilst the Iraq war was being fought, the Bush administration toned down the prominence of the Freedom Agenda in its espoused narrative. Instead, the Bush administration concentrated on explaining its operational doctrine and focused on the particulars of the conflict rather than the wider regional strategy. However, after the swift collapse of the Iraqi regime, the Freedom Agenda began to be increasingly seen as the overarching rationale for US policy. Thus, whilst the Iraq war was a point of origin

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<sup>121</sup> My point here is not to suggest that the level of democratisation is correlated with the proportion of finance allocated, but rather to suggest that the meagre financial allocation is an indicator of the policy’s low prioritisation. Given that it was the Bush administration’s premise that democracy is a universal value, which could be produced by a modernisation process, these sums were insufficient for attaining that intended objective. By contrast, the 1992 Freedom Support Act, established to support the transition away from Communism in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, received \$400 million in its first year alone (see Hawthorne 2003b).

<sup>122</sup> This is a hypothetical scenario as MEPI funding for each country is not available. However this hypothetical scenario further illustrates the point that the administration never matched means with its rhetoric.

for the Freedom Agenda, it also served as a point of departure that ultimately led to the Freedom Agenda becoming deemed the central doctrine of the Bush administration's tenure in office.

The rise in the Freedom Agenda's prominence was directly linked to failures in Iraq. The celebration of the liberated masses, which the administration had promised prior to the invasion, failed to materialise. In its place came a growing insurgency and increasing instability in the country. This fundamentally challenged the simplicity of the war on terror narrative, far from removing the 'shackles on democracy', the removal of Saddam Hussein brought with it sectarian violence and the possibility of the territorial integrity of the country being split along Shia, Sunni and Kurdish lines. As a result, the Bush administration faced increasing problems securing its war on terror narrative. The facts on the ground directly contradicted its parsimonious assertions that an invasion of Iraq would increase the security of the US. On the contrary, reports from the country were showing that supporters of Al Qaeda were increasingly infiltrating the country and seeking to set up a 'kind of safe haven for jihad against the West that Afghanistan was before September 11' (Diamond 2005: 320).

This represented a crisis of its own in the post-crisis narrative, which opened up space to criticise the Bush administration's foreign policy, and the narrative it espoused. It is important to recognise that, as Stuart Croft argues,

Any new policy programme prescribed in and through this new discourse [the war on terror] would inevitably be challenged over time. Policy programmes decay in the normal course of debate as issues and attitudes change over time; and new crises are constructed, ones that produce different discourses that take different directions (2006: 2).

The growing unease about the moral crusade plot the Bush administration had put



forward was evident in speeches the President began to make. In an attempt to defend the war on terror as an overarching rationale he began arguing that,

[A]s democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread violence and fear. They are trying to shake the will of our country and our friends, but the United States of America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. The killers will fail, and the Iraqi people will live in freedom (Bush 2004\_01\_20).

This, and many other statements to the same effect, attempted to assimilate the growing insurgency into the original narrative in an attempt to salvage the original construction of the war on terror. Those that opposed the US occupation were deemed the ‘enemies of freedom’, masking a divergent set of political objectives. Similarly, the original decision to cast the terrorist attacks as an ‘act of war’ began to be challenged in a manner that had not been done in 2001, leading the President to assert in his 2004 State of the Union address,

I know that some people question if America is really in a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved mainly with law enforcement and indictments. After the World Trade Center was first attacked in 1993, some of the guilty were indicted and tried and convicted, and sent to prison. But the matter was not settled. The terrorists were still training and plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got (Bush 2004\_01\_20).

The strength of the counter-narrative however was too persuasive in the face of evidence throughout 2004. This led to active and retired military leaders charging that the war on terror was too simplistic in its prescriptions, and that the term conveyed the impression that military power alone could address the threat (see Chollet and Goldgeier 2008: 314).

The result of this pressure gave the President cause to assert that,

*We actually misnamed the war on terror. It ought to be the struggle against ideological extremists who do not believe in free societies who happen to use terror as a weapon to try to shake the conscience of the free world. And, you*

know, that's what they do. They use terror, and they use it effectively (Bush 2004\_08\_06).

Similarly, as Donald Rumsfeld was leaving office he argued that,

I don't think I would have called it the war on terror ... I don't mean to be critical of those who have or did or - and certainly I've used the phrase frequently ... it's not a war on terror. Terror is a weapon of choice for extremists who are trying to destabilise regimes and impose their ... dark vision on all the people that they can control. So "war on terror" has a problem for me (Rumsfeld 2006\_12\_07).

Such statements marked a significant alteration in the Bush administration's espoused narrative. When faced with increasing challenges to the simplicity of the narrative, the Bush administration chose not to abandon it, but rather modify it to become more accommodating to the challenges. No longer was the enemy defined by their 'evil' nature alone, but rather by an 'ideology'. The logical conclusion of this alteration was delivered by President Bush when he asserted that

While the killers choose their victims indiscriminately, their attacks serve a clear and *focused ideology, a set of beliefs and goals that are evil, but not insane. Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant Jihadism; still others, Islamo-fascism.* Whatever it's called, this *ideology* is very different from the religion of Islam. *This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision: the establishment, by terrorism and subversion and insurgency, of a totalitarian empire that denies all political and religious freedom ... Islamic radicalism* is more like a loose network with many branches than an army under a single command<sup>123</sup> (Bush 2006\_10\_06).

The change in the characterisation of the enemy had a profound impact on the manner in which the Freedom Agenda evolved. No longer was it portrayed as a policy to prevent terrorists being recruited, but rather as a 'foreign policy based on liberty' motivated by 'hopeful ideology called freedom'. It was no longer just a strategy to transform the

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<sup>123</sup> What is particularly noteworthy about this passage is that the characterisation of the enemy remains defined as "evil". Yet the concept of evil was articulated with conceptions of rationality and a political vision. That is to say, no longer were the terrorists being defined by their 'apolitical madness' (see chapter eight), but rather were being attributed rationality and motivation towards an alternative political vision. By making this discursive move the notion that the war on terror was an ideological battle could be put forward, and the official narrative added complexity to maintain its legitimacy in the face of criticism.

Middle East, but rather a challenge to a ‘hateful ideology’ (Bush 2006\_07\_28). The shift in focus to an ideological struggle reinvented the importance of the Freedom Agenda. It built on the original narrative, presented after September 11, 2001, to include more than just military means, therefore answering critics of the war on terror. Yet, in doing so the Freedom Agenda was presented as the overarching rationale for US foreign policy. Accordingly, the President argued that,

*The war we fight today is more than a military conflict; it is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century. On one side are those who believe in the values of freedom and moderation ... And on the other side are those driven by the values of tyranny and extremism (Bush 2006\_08\_31).*

*We are engaged in the defining ideological struggle of the 21st century. The terrorists oppose every principle of humanity and decency that we hold dear. Yet in this war on terror, there is one thing we and our enemies agree on: *In the long run, men and women who are free to determine their own destinies will reject terror and refuse to live in tyranny. And that is why the terrorists are fighting to deny this choice to the people in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Palestinian Territories. And that is why, for the security of America and the peace of the world, we are spreading the hope of freedom* (Bush 2008\_01\_28).*

Within this iteration of the war on terror narrative, ideological struggle was seen to be the central plot and the Freedom Agenda as America’s method of victory. This was an implicit recognition of the limitations of the previous narrative; the narrative was cumulatively yet iteratively adapted so that the Freedom Agenda transformed into the central paradigm in what remain a moral crusade.

Making the spread of liberty central to US foreign policy was explicitly the goal of President Bush’s second term in office. When informing Michael Gerson, the president’s chief speech writer, of what he wanted to be included in his upcoming second inaugural address, President Bush explicitly told him that he needed to get across a single idea: ‘The future of America and the security of America depends on the spread of liberty’ (see

Woodward 2006: 371). This was to be as central to the war on terror as containment had been in the Cold War. The President was explicitly trying to modify the war on terror narrative so that the Freedom Agenda would become the single overarching rationale for US foreign policy. Via claims that the regional status quo had not provided security, evident on September 11, 2001, the President increasingly asserted that,

*As long as the Middle East remains a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will continue to produce men and movements that threaten the safety of America and our friends. So America is pursuing a forward strategy of freedom in the greater Middle East. We will challenge the enemies of reform, confront the allies of terror, and expect a higher standard from our friends* (Bush 2004\_01\_20).

Given the centrality of the Freedom Agenda, it was no longer sufficient to argue that it was a product of transcendental values or based on principle alone. Rather, a more complex security rationale was endowed upon the policy. Throughout 2004 until the end of Bush's tenure in office, the Bush administration increasingly began to narrate the Freedom Agenda as a method of securing a global democratic peace. To substantiate these claims the Bush administration increasingly justified the pursuit of the Freedom Agenda by appropriating the logic of democratic peace theory. In the President's own words:

*The freedom agenda is based upon our deepest ideals and our vital interests ... We [Americans] believe that freedom is a gift from an almighty God ... And we also know, by history and by logic, that promoting democracy is the surest way to build security. Democracies don't attack each other or threaten the peace. Governments accountable to the voters focus on building roads and schools - not weapons of mass destruction. Young people who have a say in their future are less likely to search for meaning in extremism. Citizens who can join a peaceful political party are less likely to join a terrorist organisation. Dissidents with the freedom to protest around the clock are less likely to blow themselves up during rush hour. And nations that commit to freedom for their people will not support terrorists - they will join us in defeating them* (Bush 2006\_07\_28).

This was coupled with continuous assertions such as 'in Europe, as in Asia, as in every

region of the world, the advance of freedom leads to peace’ and ‘we believe democracy yields peace’ (Bush 2003\_11\_06, 2006). Such calls appeared to give Washington’s national security liberalism the guise of a scientific imperative, because of the empirical strength of the thesis. Indeed, many academic studies have demonstrated that the number of wars between democracies during the past two centuries has been low, ranging from ‘zero to less than a handful depending on precisely how democracy is defined’ (Levy 1988: 661-2). Consequently, as Jack Levy argues, the ‘absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations’ (1988: 661-2).

Significantly, the appeal to democratic peace theory is not new to American foreign policy, as similar sentiments have been expressed by successive administrations since the end the Cold War<sup>124</sup>. However, the G. W. Bush administration was the first to suggest that this could be done in the Middle East and created institutions in the foreign policy bureaucracy to pursue this end. The vision that the President increasingly espoused was one in which the national interest is satisfied by creating a ‘zone of peace’ in the Middle East, in which the nature of democracy creates a reluctance to go to war with other states in the region, whilst also undermining the appeal of terrorism. This created a cocktail in which democratic peace theory was not only the route to peace but had universal applicability, and democracy promotion was seen as the silver bullet to the problems of terrorism through to proliferation. Democratic peace theory therefore played a significant role in justifying the direction of US strategy. It provided part of the administration’s

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<sup>124</sup> Accordingly, President G. H. W. Bush Senior argued ‘In a world where we are the only remaining superpower, it is the role of the United States to marshal its moral and material resources to promote a *democratic peace*. It is our responsibility - it is our opportunity - to lead’ (Bush 1993\_01\_11). Moreover the notion of democratic peace theory was carried through to the Clinton administration and had a significant impact on its foreign policy. Thus as Michael Cox notes ‘possibly no other academic idea emanating from the academic community exercised as much influence as this one on the White House’ (2000: 326).

ideological-discursive formation that motivated and legitimised a liberal grand strategy for the MENA region.

### **The Ideological Discursive Formation Underpinning the Moral Crusade Narrative**

As the Bush administration increasingly declared that democracy promotion was in the national interest, and that it should be at the heart of US-MENA relations, one of the most persistent critiques to emerge was that the administration failed to set out a rationalisation for what was being constructed as a radical change in emphasis. As Amy Hawthorne declared, ‘no coherent rationale has been set forth to explain why the United States should advance democracy in the region’ (2003a: 22). Contrary to this notion this research has demonstrated that the Bush administration did in fact construct an increasingly ideological justification embedded in the post-crisis narrative it put forward. Moreover, a distinguishable feature of the narrative was the manner in which it appropriated academic theories slowly and accumulatively as the Freedom Agenda evolved. Ultimately, the Freedom Agenda can therefore be seen as the institutionalisation of a complex set of ideas, which were articulated together and imbricated throughout the Bush administration’s tenure in office. To clarify this point it is productive to recall the defining parts of the ideological-discursive formation at the heart of the Freedom Agenda.

1. Primacy
2. Hegemonic Stability Theory
3. Unilateralism
4. Neoliberalism
5. Modernisation thesis
6. Teleological understanding of history
7. American Exceptionalism
8. Moral Realism
9. Transcendentalism
10. Domino theory
11. Democratic Peace theory

These ideas, once articulated together provided the framework for the Freedom Agenda

and were embedded in the narrative put forward by the Bush administration to legitimise its policy on the Middle East. Notably, this narrative did not appear from nowhere, but rather was constructed as a response to the events of September 11, 2001. From the initial post-crisis response, the Freedom Agenda emerged through a series of iterative and cumulative steps. Candidate Bush began his quest for office by asserting a ‘Distinctly American Internationalism’ as his answer to the lack of a coherent rationale which characterised the post-Cold War milieu. However, once in office this proved to be insufficient. However, the events of September 11, 2001, provided a moment of punctuation in political time. The initial response from the Bush administration was to construct a plot in which the events were represented as a national tragedy. This plot then evolved to become a moral play in which the concept of ‘freedom’ became foregrounded. This laid the discursive tracks for the eventual evolution of the Freedom Agenda to appear a legitimate response to the attacks. This moral play was then seamlessly transformed into the plot of a moral crusade, in which the enemy was characterised as evil and the policy was a counter terrorism policy based on eradication. The characterisation of the enemy did not remain static. Rather, from “evil terrorists”, it transformed into “evil terrorists and the states that harbor them”, then into “evil terrorists, states that harbor them and rouge regimes seeking or possessing WMD”. As the war on terror narrative began to be challenged, the Bush administration increasingly put forward its transformational vision, characterising the enemy as an ‘ideology’ that could be defeated with ‘freedom’. The Freedom Agenda was developed as a result of the events of September 11, 2001. Whilst the events themselves represented a moment of punctuation, the post-crisis narrative presented by the Bush administration shaped the content of change, culminating in the Freedom Agenda being developed.

## **Section Four:**

# **Constituting the Freedom Agenda; Between Democracy and Domination**

*The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name - liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names - liberty and tyranny.*

**Abraham Lincoln**



## **11. A Divided Ad Hoc Strategy; the Rise of a Neoliberal Agenda**

Section three of this research explicitly addressed how the Freedom Agenda evolved as a direct consequence of the ‘9/11 crisis’. It set out the construction of a particular ideological-discursive formation embedded within the Bush administration’s espoused narrative. This combined various theories in the form of primacy, hegemonic stability theory, neoliberalism, modernisation thesis, universalism, domino theory and democratic peace theory. Moreover, in section two of this research the constructivist institutionalist methodology asserted that this ideological-discursive formation would shape the path that the Freedom Agenda would take and its institutionalisation. This section of the research unequivocally addresses this assertion. It brings these two strands of the research together, and answers the question of ‘how the Freedom Agenda was constituted and why it was done in this way?’ As a consequence it builds on, and provides an analysis of the Freedom Agenda institutions that were set out in chapter one of this thesis. It also provides a more critical response to the literature, and in doing so undermines assertions made by both the Freedom Agenda’s critics and advocates. This is done by firstly demonstrating that whilst the Freedom Agenda was asserted as the overarching rationale for President Bush’s foreign policy, the term itself masked considerable disagreement within the administration. The Freedom Agenda was met with considerable hostility in some quarters of the Bush administration itself. Secondly, the notion of a Freedom Agenda disguises the extent to which the Bush administration found itself lacking the ability to promote democracy in the region. As a direct consequence of both of these factors, the Bush administration found itself adopting a policy of *conservative radicalism*.

The approach was *radical* to the extent that it insisted on political democracy, yet *conservative* in its desire to safeguard the socio-economic privileges and power of the

established order to secure regional stability. Such a strategy was caught between free trade liberalisation as the positive route to liberty, and domination to the extent that it increasingly favoured regional stability, the continuation of long-term security interests, and the undermining of regimes that challenged its hegemony of the region. As the Bush administration oscillated between emphasising both of these elements it enabled a double standard in the Freedom Agenda to emerge. For MENA allies, the Bush administration relied on the definition of freedom it set out on the 2000 campaign trail and proposing a gradualist sequential policy with neoliberal-modernisation thesis at its core. However, for regimes that opposed US power in the region a more hostile approach was taken that led to MEPI funding being diverted to support regime change by internal dissidents and exiled groups. Ultimately, this led to the Freedom Agenda lacking coherence and emancipatory potential.

### **The Challenge from Within: The Foreign Policy Bureaucracy's Resistance and the 'Conflict of Interests' Problematic**

The notion that democracy should be promoted in the MENA was the driving factor behind the Freedom Agenda. Yet, the umbrella term 'Freedom Agenda' implies a much more coherent policy than was actually the case. There was in fact considerable divergence within the Bush administration as to why democracy should be promoted and if it should be promoted at all. The official narrative asserted that it was out of 'principle', in the 'national interest' and would create a 'democratic peace' between the MENA region and the West. However, three distinct groups existed within the administration. Firstly, there were those that believed September 11, 2001, demonstrated the need to transform the MENA into a zone of pro-American democracies, and were willing to use force if necessary. Secondly, there was a group that believed that democracy promotion could be used as a method of winning "hearts and minds" in the

region, and therefore called for public diplomacy programmes and democracy assistance funding. Thirdly, there was a group that believed undemocratic governance was the cause of terrorism, but recommended engaging existing governments to promote reform (Hawthorne 2003a: 22).

Accordingly, the Freedom Agenda was not held together by a coherent rationale, but rather as an agreement between various strategic actors within the state bureaucracy. These strategic actors saw the strategically selective context differently, but largely subscribed to the Freedom Agenda because it satisfied notions of what they believed were in the national interest. Contrastingly, there were strategic actors within the state bureaucracy that viewed the selective context differently. They saw the Freedom Agenda as damaging to long term interests and resisted its implementation. This set the stage for a significant power struggle between MEPI, the State Department and the Defense Department.

Many members of MEPI, led by Elizabeth Cheney, were pushing for the democratisation strategy for the Middle East. In late 2002, they established their offices in the State Department's *Bureau of Near East Affairs* (NEA). However, a defining feature of this group was that they were drawn from the *National Endowment for Democracy*, and its 'children', the *National Democratic Institute* (NDI) and the *International Republican Institute* (IRI). They had developed their expertise in democracy assistance from their experiences in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union. Herein, upon coming into the MEPI offices, their main understanding of democracy promotion was through the *Freedom Support Act* that had been applied to former Soviet Satellite states. Consequently, they had expertise in the form of a template of programmes, such as improving the rule of law, strengthening parliaments and political parties, and training

political candidates. This was strongly reflected in the MEPI programmes. However, this group lacked expertise in the Middle East, and sought to acquire this with the aid of other members of the *Bureau of Near East Affairs*. This proved highly problematic. Rather than providing help to MEPI, many long term officials in the NEA sought to undermine it. Indeed, Tamara Coffman Wittes described them as ‘pushing back really hard against this policy’, and portrayed the situation as one in which,

they [NEA Staff] didn’t like it and so you have a bunch of people going in who need regional information and expertise, and the people who are giving it to them are trying to undermine them at the same time ... [Also] you had a bunch of ambassadors who when MEPI was first announced, saying well what the heck is this and why am I now responsible for doing this. This is going to screw up my relations with the host government, why am I being forced to create tension in this relationship. That’s not my job. And we’re just trying to ignore it or do the minimum (Wittes 2008c).

Moreover, resistance to the Freedom Agenda was not only the preserve of the State Department. Similar opposition came from the Department of Defense, as the Freedom Agenda began to conflict with other long term regional interests. This was especially the case with Egypt and Morocco, but applied to other regional allies with significant military relationships with the US. Thus,

the Defense Department was very important in pushing back. And so whether it was a question of a mid-level official Defense Department official making a trip to a country abroad, what was he going to say, what was in his talking points on human rights and democracy. A lot of times they just didn’t have those talking points, or if it was a bigger issue like what’s the future of US aid to Egypt ... There was a big interagency process that went on over the course of a year and the Defense Department sits at the table, and Commerce is at the table, and State is at the table ... and Defense is saying excuse me don’t mess with this aid, this is too important to them providing logistical support to our operations in Afghanistan, and their giving the spare material to the Lebanese army to fight Fatah al-Islam. Don’t screw with this, its too important. So that was also a source of push back against the policy, and an important one because it gets to the substantive policy conflicts in democracy promotion (Wittes 2008c).

Given such insights it is difficult to agree with both critics and proponents of the

Freedom Agenda who allege that the Bush administration put democracy promotion at the forefront of its policy (see chapter three). Yet, within the US foreign policy bureaucracy there was considerable resistance, which ultimately led to the actual institutionalisation and implementation of the Freedom Agenda reflecting a strong awareness of the ‘conflict of interests’ problem. As J. Scott Carpenter<sup>125</sup> has argued, the Freedom Agenda was a ‘tertiary concern’. This was behind regional security and by 2007 a renewed interest in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Carpenter 2008). A more accurate analysis of the situation is that America’s core objective in the Middle East remained regional stability to secure its long term interests, because the Bush administration

[W]as never able to delineate how it would handle perceived trade-offs between the long-term project of democracy promotion and the shorter term imperatives such as counter-terrorism, assistance in stabilising Iraq, and support for the Middle East peace process (Wittes 2008b: 79).

This point was reinforced by the policy of extraordinary rendition (set out in chapter nine). The Bush administration was willing to send contradictory messages to MENA regimes in order to secure more immediate goals in the war on terror. This raised serious credibility issues regarding the sincerity of its Freedom Agenda to observers in the Middle East and beyond. The starkness of this contradiction was evident as members of the CIA such as Michael F. Scheuer, the former Chief of the CIA’s Bin Laden Unit, were asserting that,

there were no qualms at all about sending people to Cairo and kind of joking up our [the CIA] sleeves about what would happen to those people in Cairo in Egyptian prisons ... I don’t care what happens to the people who are targeted and rendered ... Mistakes are made ... They are not Americans. I really don’t care ... I never got paid, sir, to be a citizen of the world (see H.C.F.A. 2007).

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<sup>125</sup> J. Scott Carpenter served in the Bush administration as assistant secretary of state in the NEA, and oversaw MEPI from 2004 until becoming coordinator of the BMENA in 2006.

The contradiction between claims of promoting freedom in the Middle East and using Middle Eastern prisons for ‘torture, indefinite detentions, and disappearances’ did not go unnoticed. As Representative Bill Delahunt, Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight, pointed out:

*These extraordinary renditions are utterly inconsistent with our broader foreign policy goals of promoting democracy and the rule of law, the very foundations of civil society. These practices have brought us universal condemnation and have frustrated our efforts to work in a concerted way with our allies in fighting terrorism (H.C.F.A. 2007).*

Moreover, extraordinary rendition demonstrated a dependency on the very regimes the Bush administration claimed to want to reform by offering an ‘ideology of freedom’. More problematic than this, however, was that, under the rubric of security demands, the Bush administration sought to utilise for its own purposes the very conditions it claimed were the cause of terrorism. This demonstrated that when long term interests or immediate security concerns challenged the Freedom Agenda, it became highly apparent that they would win over calls for democracy promotion. The Freedom Agenda was far from the overarching rationale the Bush administration claimed it to be. Not only did this demonstrate that the prominence of the Freedom Agenda was being considerably overstated by the administration, but that the Bush administration failed to pursue the policy with a modicum of coherence. Placing a sign on the entrance gate of Guantanamo Bay detention facility, which read ‘Honour bound to defend freedom’, strongly illustrates this point; if not an acute sense of irony.

### **Strategic Actors in the Strategically Selective Context: Push for Elections and Retreat**

Whilst regional stability remained the overriding goal of US foreign policy towards the MENA, within the first few years of the Freedom Agenda being launched the Bush administration was particularly vocal about pushing for elections. Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice publicly confronted close allies Egypt and Saudi Arabia to hold fair elections, release political prisoners, and allow free expression and rights for women (see Weisman 2005). Moreover, with the death of Yasir Arafat in late 2004, the Bush administration supported swift elections for a new president of the Palestinian Authority and goaded new parliamentary elections in the West Bank and Gaza. Within the Freedom Agenda narrative, the Bush administration had put forward a vision of the future in which democracy would be the cure to the Palestinian plight, and that open and free elections would give cause for the US to support a viable Palestinian state. With the electoral victory of Mahmoud Abbas in January 2005, Washington's preferred candidate, it appeared that the Bush administration had a new more "moderate" President of the Palestinian Authority to work with in the peace process.

The period between 2004-06 looked promising for regional reform, indeed the Bush administration was keen to point out that an 'Arab spring' was taking place in which there were broad elections in Afghanistan and Iraq; limited elections in Egypt and Saudi Arabia; the 'Cedar' revolution in Lebanon which removed Syrian occupational forces; political reforms in Morocco and Jordan; and women's suffrage introduced in Kuwait. For the Bush administration such acts constituted 'extraordinary progress in the expansion of freedom' (NSC 2006: 2). This was supported by *Freedom House* in 2005 that measured 'modest positive trends' taking place throughout the region (see Abrams 2005). What were by any measure moderate successes, were being trumpeted by the Bush administration and some members of the political commentariat, as vindication for the Iraq war and the Freedom Agenda more generally. The New York Times had articles expounding an '*Unexpected whiff of freedom proves bracing for the Mideast*' and '*For Bush, a taste of vindication in Mideast*' (MacFarquhar 2005; Purdum 2005). Whilst Charles Krauthammer boldly asserted that,

[H]istory has begun to speak, and it says that America made the right decision to invade Iraq ... Right on what? That America, using power harnessed to democratic ideals, could begin to transform the Arab world from endless tyranny and intolerance to decent governance and democratisation (Krauthammer 2005).

The naivety of such statements became all the more apparent in early 2006. By placing open elections centre stage of the Freedom Agenda's mechanism for democratic advancement, the Bush administration proved to have considerable blind-spots in its ideological-discursive formation. Imbibing the belief that democracy and freedom were the natural state of human affairs, and that the universal appeal of 'God's gift to humanity' would trump all, senior members of the administration did not consider the possibility of the 'Islamist dilemma'. That is to say that they fundamentally misunderstood the strategically selective context in which they were operating. Thus, when Hamas won the parliamentary elections on January 25, 2006 with a 'landslide' the result was one of shock within the administration. Before the election, when Paul Wolfowitz was asked about the likelihood of elections in 'friendly regimes' empowering Islamists his response was highly revealing:

Look fifty per cent of the Arab world are women. Most of these women do not want to live in a theocratic state. The other fifty percent are men. I know a lot of them. I don't think they want to live in a theocratic state ... it's absurdly unrealistic, demonstrably unrealistic, to ignore how strong the desire for freedom is (in Smith 2007: 146).

Such a statement is revealing as it demonstrates that because of an unquestioned belief in the power of 'freedom' the Bush administration had lowered the bar on its conception of how difficult democratising the Middle East would be. It is little wonder therefore that when Condoleezza Rice heard that Hamas had won, her initial response was 'well, that's not right', followed by 'oh my goodness, Hamas won?' (in Bumiller 2007). That the Secretary of State could be caught off guard compounds the fact that the administration had a poor understanding of the challenges faced in democratising the region, and was



receiving poor intelligence from its embassies in the MENA.

Pushing for elections was not just limited to the Palestinian territories. With the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005, there appeared to be a 'Beirut Spring', with large crowds marching in the streets and sympathetic police aiding them in avoiding police blockades. The response from Washington was that this marked a milestone in the Freedom Agenda, as the President argued that

anyone who doubts the appeal of freedom in the Middle East can look to Lebanon, where the Lebanese people are demanding a free and independent nation. In the words of one Lebanese observer, "Democracy is knocking at the door of this country and, if it's successful in Lebanon, it is going to ring the doors of every Arab regime." (Bush 2005\_03\_08).

This was accompanied by pressure on Syria to withdraw its military occupation, as the Bush administration imposed an array of sanctions on Syria's government and banks, and froze the assets of Syrian officials implicated in Mr. Hariri's killing (Cooper and Sanger 2006). Moreover, in this milieu, the Bush administration also pushed for swift parliamentary elections, in the hope of securing the apparent national consensus demonstrated by the 'Beirut Spring'. The result of these elections however gave Hezbollah increased political power, in the form of cabinet slots in a new coalition government (see Pressman 2009: 161). Once again the Islamist dilemma, dismissed by the Bush administration, proved to be problematic for the aspiration of creating a democratic peace with the West.

The pattern of Islamic groups hostile to Washington was repeated throughout the 'Arab Spring', which included the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt and Shiites backed by militias in Iraq (Weisman 2006a). This was coupled with the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war in

Lebanon and increasing civil violence in Iraq despite hopes that the elections would calm the insurgency (Kurth 2006). Thus, in 2006, *Freedom House* measured a fall in the previous year's gains as many autocrats in the region began to withdraw what little political and civil openings they had made available; with Egypt delaying municipal elections by two years, Yemen cracking down on the news media and Jordan abandoning many reform plans (Noland and Pack 2007: 273; Fattah 2006). By placing a procedural understanding of democracy, namely elections, at the forefront of the Freedom Agenda the Bush administration proved that its ideological-discursive formation was woefully inadequate in understanding the strategically selective context. Although the administration had established an ideological justification for why reforming the Middle East was in the national interest, it had failed to appreciate how the original strategically selective context that led to previous administrations supporting friendly regimes remained.

These setbacks led to growing dissent in the Republican Party, with Representative Henry Hyde, the Chairman of the International Relations Committee, condemning the Bush strategy because of its emphasis on democracy as a 'magic bullet'. Moreover, the electoral success of Islamists gave 'realists' in the Republican Party cause to challenge the Bush administration's approach and condemn the emphasis on democracy promotion at the expense of other American interests (Weisman 2006b). The results of this challenge were stark. Where Condoleezza Rice had once pronounced the need to move towards democracy, by 2007 there was near silence on pressuring for domestic reform and the void was filled with appreciative comments about Egypt's support in the region and Saudi Arabia was now referred to as "moderate" (Diehl 2007: 15; Slackman 2007). From 2007, many members of the Freedom Agenda institutions were increasingly sidelined within a State Department that had not wanted to pursue the idea of democracy

promotion and now appeared to have their hostility vindicated. As the Bush administration lowered the level of pressure it applied to MENA regimes, it became evident that members of the Freedom Agenda institutions were not getting the support from the higher echelons of the administration, resulting in some high profile advocates leaving their posts (see Rozen 2008).

### **A Two-Path Agenda: Conservative Radicalism**

Although the Bush administration increasingly outlined a more complex understanding of why pursuing the Freedom Agenda was in the national interest, the narrative that was espoused was too vague and relied on ideological convictions rather than detailed empirical subscriptions. This led to the Bush administration failing to deal with the structural challenges that the policy faced. Overwhelmingly, the Bush administration faced the spectre of the “Islamist dilemma” that haunts US-MENA relations, which ultimately damaged the Bush administration’s willingness to challenge friendly MENA regimes (Ibrahim 2006: 15). Given such circumstances the Freedom Agenda was able to do little to fund projects that authoritarian governments would not like, such as push for more open political systems, radically support opposition parties or provide robust election observation. This was highly evident in US-Egyptian relations. The US Congress specified in the *FY2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act* [P.L. 108-447] that,

[D]emocracy and governance activities shall not be subject to the prior approval of the GoE [government of Egypt]. The managers intend this language to include NGOs and other segments of civil society that may not be registered with, or officially recognized by, the GoE. However, the managers understand that the GoE should be kept informed of funding provided pursuant to these activities.

This was the first time that the US had decided to give independent funding to Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Egypt, therefore bypassing the Egyptian government’s highly restrictive legislation on funding civil society groups (Sharp 2007:

13; see Elbayar 2005). This was a direct challenge to the Mubarak regime as the US was advocating a change in policy that favoured opposition movements. However, by June 2006, the Egyptian government responded by ordering the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), [“children” of the NED], to cease all activities in Egypt until they formally registered with the government and obtained a licence. Under the rubric of ‘national security’ concerns the Egyptian government forced all programmatic activity to a halt. As Bahieddin Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, noted at the time,

the decision to halt the activities of the two institutes has to do with the regime's new agenda to curb public dissent and is not in any way linked to press claims that they are threatening national security (in Shahine 2006).

This crackdown was part of a larger approach adopted by the Mubarak regime, in which judges were intimidated, bloggers arrested, local elections were postponed, and emergency laws were renewed (see Wittes 2008b: 78). The response from the White House was muted at best, with the President and Vice President meeting with Mubarak’s son, Gamal Mubarak, but refusing to comment on what was said (NYT 2006). By July 2006 events in the region began to require Egyptian help in trying to diffuse a war between Israel in Lebanon. As a result Condoleezza Rice poured praise on the Egyptian regime for its ‘very positive role ... in trying to diffuse the crisis’ (Rice 2006\_07\_13). Ultimately it appeared that the Freedom Agenda’s credibility was being challenged, and the Bush administration had retreated into placing more immediate security concerns first.

The example of what happened in Egypt, is however telling of a much wider quality possessed by the Freedom Agenda. Notably, with a lack of strategic guidance, the Freedom Agenda institutions funded democratisation projects in a ‘hodgepodge’ manner

(Hawthorne 2005). As J. Scott Carpenter confessed in his role of overseeing MEPI,

We don't know yet how best to promote democracy in the Arab Middle East. I mean we just don't know. It's the early days ... I think there are times when you throw spaghetti against the wall and see if it sticks (in Finkel 2005).

By 2006, through to the end of the Bush administration's tenure in office, it became highly evident of what exactly had 'stuck' as an approach to US-MENA relations. Namely, the Bush administration had adopted a policy of conservative radicalism. The approach was *radical* to the extent that it insisted on political democracy, yet *conservative* in its desire to safeguard the socio-economic privileges and power of the established order to secure regional stability (see Smith 1994: 180). However, what was noticeable about such a strategy, was that the radical side was being targeted at regimes that opposed US influence in the region, whilst the conservative side was the approach adopted for friendly allies in the MENA. As the Bush administration oscillated between emphasising both of these elements it enabled a double standard in the Freedom Agenda to emerge.

For regimes that challenged pax-Americana in the region, such as Iran and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, they had become labelled "Axis of Evil" states. The price of such opposition was the Freedom Agenda's radical side, which insisted on regime change and political democracy. In Iraq this had been forcibly brought about by military coercion, followed by J. Scott Carpenter's idea, at the time working in the America's Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, that sovereignty should be transferred quickly and unexpectedly to catch insurgents off guard. Subsequently, the Bush administration would try to 'shape' the outcome of elections, rather than 'dictate' them (Woodward 2006: 313-4; 436). However, in Iran and Syria, strong diplomatic pressure was coupled with the *Iran Democracy Program* and the *Syria Democracy Program*, which sought to utilise

MEPI funds and personnel to bolster internal dissidents and exile groups wanting US-supported regime change (see DOS 2006b; Ganji 2006; Sharp 2009). Accordingly, without a credible military solution for preventing Iran developing its nuclear weapons capability, the State Department in conjunction with the Defense Department setup a new *Iran-Syria Operations Group* that reported to Elizabeth Cheney (Dinmore 2006; Baxter 2006).

The radical side of the Freedom Agenda demonstrated the prominence of primacy as a node in the Bush administration's ideological-discursive formation. Challenging American power in the region was met with attempts at regime change. No clear example of this can be demonstrated than in the Palestinian territories. Having been surprised by the electoral success of Hamas in 2006, the Bush administration speedily overturned its dedication to democracy promotion and set about its archetypal response to the rise of such a regime. Despite being democratically elected, the United States along with the European Union responded swiftly by cutting off aid to the Palestinian Authority and refused to work with the Hamas-led government (see Turner 2006). More problematic however was the covert initiative from within the Bush administration to supply new weapons and training to Fatah, designed to remove the democratically elected Hamas-led government from power (see Rose 2008; Greenway 2007). Whilst such an attempt failed, leading to a civil war in the Palestinian territories, it demonstrates a guiding rule underpinning the Freedom Agenda. The United States would aspire to promote democracy in the Middle East if and only if the results of this did not challenge its influence and other interests in the region. Thus demonstrating how 'making other people free is said to be the goal of US foreign policy; but the natives are expected not only to accept the offer of freedom but also to show their gratitude' (Ingram 2007: 3).

For regimes that helped maintain pax-Americana and secure America's historical interests, the *conservative* approach was put forward and the Freedom Agenda was designed to generate stability through liberalisation, with democratisation being a secondary long-term goal. This distinction is crucial because, whilst "democratisation" signifies a move toward greater degrees of political participation in existing governmental systems, "liberalisation" can mean any reform that enhances the individual freedom enjoyed by a citizen. Thus, unlike Iraq, Iran and Syria, when it came to regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Yemen, the Bush administration never advocated regime change through either military action, democratic populism or civil disobedience. This was reflected in the Freedom Agenda programmes, which showed an overwhelming emphasis on low risk gradualist policies that emphasised promoting evolutionary reform of existing status quo regimes. This was not democratic reform as much as it was the *promotion of the conditions for eventual democratic reform*, highlighting that the Freedom Agenda was a policy that construed democracy as a long term project emerging out of a 'social and economic context that should be prepared' (Wittes and Yerkes 2006b: 17).

The grand liberal strategy that the Bush administration espoused, rejecting the status quo in favour of freedom, came with some strong caveats. President Bush consistently made clear that the war on terror and the Freedom Agenda were a 'generational commitment', and that the promotion of 'working democracies always need time to develop ... and this makes us patient and understanding as other nations are at different stages of this journey' (Bush 2003\_11\_06). Moreover, as a senior Bush administration official hastened to add after the launch of the MEPI, the US was not planning 'to abandon long-term allies such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt because of their lack of democracy' but would offer 'positive reinforcement for emerging reform trends' (in Ottaway 2005: 182).

A factor that was consistently reinforced by the use of the term ‘partnerships’. As Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway argued,

the softer, long-term side of the US push for democracy in the Middle East is, at best a work in progress. Its slow advance is in part due to the unfamiliar territory to be traversed and uncertainty about how to proceed. But it is also due to the fact that, as urgent and serious as the pro-democracy imperative appears to many in the US policy community, the stubborn reality remains that the United States has other important security related and economic interests, such as cooperation on antiterrorism enforcement actions and ensuring secure access to oil. Such interests impel it to maintain close ties with many of the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and be wary of the possibility of rapid or unpredictable political change (2005: 5).

Conspicuously, when the radical side of the agenda was emphasised, the Bush administration was portraying ‘freedom’ as something that could be engineered from the outside, and in the case of Iraq brought to the country by coercion. Emphasis was placed on the universality of freedom, which merely required tyrannical regimes to be removed and the natural aspirations of the ‘human spirit’ to come forth. Yet, with the conservative side of the approach it was argued that the inherent nature of democracy meant that it could not be imposed from the outside and that America simply didn’t have the power to decree that MENA regimes obey its demands to reform. As Richard Haass argued before the launch of the MEPI ‘while it can be encouraged from outside, democracy is best built from within’ (in Ottaway 2005: 182). Given this juxtaposition, it became highly evident that the Bush administration was legitimising its gradualist approach through appealing to the neoliberal conception of freedom, and the modernisation process it would inspire. This remained a defining feature of the Bush administration’s strategy to global affairs from the aspirations set out in the 2000 Presidential campaign, through to Robert B. Zoelick’s proposal that democracy could be brought about by free trade just days after 9/11, and the eventual institutionalisation of MEFTA.



## **The ‘Neoliberal’ Freedom Agenda: Freedom as Markets and Modernisation**

Although the conservative radicalism approach to the MENA demonstrated two divergent approaches to dealing with the region, as the Freedom Agenda progressed it became highly evident that they had a common core. Notably both approaches utilised the same neoliberal conception of ‘freedom’ embedded within the Bush administration’s ideological-discursive formation (as set out in chapter seven). The first signs of the practical application of neoliberalism in the Freedom Agenda manifested themselves in Iraq. Whilst insurgency was rife and personal security was largely absent throughout most of the cities in Iraq, Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, decided that it was time to ‘teach influential Iraqis the basics of a free-market economy’ (Bremer and McConnell 2006: 63). On September 19, 2003 Bremer ordered,

The full privatisation of public enterprises, full ownership rights by foreign firms of Iraqi businesses, full repatriation of foreign profits ... the opening of Iraq’s banks to foreign control, national treatment for foreign companies, and the elimination of nearly all trade barriers (in Harvey 2005: 6).

These orders were to apply to all areas of the economy, including public services, the media, manufacturing, transportation, finance, and construction. Whilst the labour market was to be strictly regulated, strikes were effectively outlawed in key sectors and the right to unionise restricted (see Juhasz 2006). Notably, this neoliberal agenda ignored the advice of Milton Friedman, who in 2001 admitted that a decade earlier he would have advised that any economy moving from a socialist economy, much like Iraq’s, should follow three words ‘privatise, privatise, privatise’. However, he then conceded that ‘I was wrong ... It turns out that the rule of law is probably more basic than privatisation’ (in Fukuyama 2004: 25). This advice had not reached the higher echelons of the Bush administration and the Coalition Provisional Authority, which placed marketisation before securing the cities in Iraq. As Donald Rumsfeld declared at a tribute to Milton Friedman, ‘Milton is the embodiment of the truth that “ideas have consequences.” ... So,

yes, he has changed the course of history' (Rumsfeld 2002\_05\_09). Iraq had become a test case for American style free market capitalism in the Middle East (see Looney 2003). Whilst Thomas Friedman (2005) of the *New York Times* was keen to point out, 'we are not doing nation-building in Iraq. We are doing nation-creating', Naomi Klein asserted that

Overnight, Iraq went from being one of the most isolated countries in the world, sealed off from the most basic trade by strict UN sanctions, to becoming the widest-open market anywhere (2007: 339).

With the Bush administration espousing domino theory it became clear exactly what type of exemplar 'model' Iraq was supposed to set for the rest of the region. This was a far cry from President Bush's assertion that,

as we watch and encourage reforms in the region, we are mindful that modernisation is not the same as Westernisation. Representative governments in the Middle East will reflect their own cultures. They will not, and should not, look like us (Bush 2003\_11\_06).

With full scale neoliberalisation taking place in Iraq, it was evident that the Iraqi people had not decided to take their economy down this path. Consequently, Iraq's interim trade minister, Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi, argued that,

We suffered through the economic theories of socialism, Marxism and then cronyism ... Now we face the prospect of free-market fundamentalism ... This push to sell everything is the political stance of economic fundamentalism ... A plan based on ideology, not economics is, of course, naturally wrong ... By no means should we preserve all state-owned enterprises ... But there are some sectors that are more natural for government involvement or rehabilitation ... We understand the need for foreign investment ... But we worry that, too, many people will be driven out of business before they have a chance to organise ... [The Iraqi people are] sick and tired of being the subjects of experiments. There have been enough shocks to the system, so we don't need this shock therapy in the economy (in Crampton 2003).

Condemnation of adopting this neoliberal strategy in Iraq came from diverse corners.

Paul Krugman, the of the *New York Times* and winner of the Nobel Prize for economics,

argued that by introducing free-trade, supply-side tax policy and privatisation into Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority ‘undermined the chances for a successful transition to democracy’ and reinforced ‘the sense of many Iraqis that we [America] came as occupiers, not liberators’ (Krugman 2004a). Krugman later added that by turning Iraq into ‘a playground for right-wing economic theorists ... the administration did terrorist recruiters a very big favor’ (Krugman 2004b). Similar discord was echoed by Newt Gingrich, the former speaker of the House of Representatives, who told Vice President Cheney that ‘Bremer’s [economic] model was totally wrong. Totally.’ and added that ‘Bremer is the largest single disaster in American foreign policy in modern times’ (in Woodward 2006: 252).

What the Iraq experiment showed however was that the Bush administration was trying to establish its ‘single sustainable model’ in Iraq. Such sentiments had been codified in the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) which argued that,

[T]he great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom - and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise (NSC, 2002).

Consequently, it was through the appropriation of academic theories, articulated with the constant repetition of the word “freedom”, that the administration legitimised both its intervention and strategy in the region. Importantly, this essentially contested concept was rarely utilised alone. It was part of a collocation that became defined by the ‘company’ that it kept, and habitually and predictably being articulated with terms such as “peace”, “democracy”, “free trade” and “free markets”. Thus, as the NSS 2002 set out,

[T]he U.S. will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of *freedom*

across the globe ... We will actively work to bring the hope of *democracy, development, free markets, and free trade* to every corner of the world (emphasis added NSC 2002).

As a result the abstract boundaries of the term “freedom” were reified and conditioned by ideologically framing the debate around a triumvirate of widely understood American values; “freedom, democracy and free enterprise” (see Reus-Smit 2004: 34-38; Steger 2005). By articulating the triumvirate together what appear to be pluralistic concepts were sutured together in an attempt to close their political contestability. Such an act legitimised the notion that they combine into ‘a single sustainable model for national success’ (NSC 2002: 1). This created a paradox in which ‘freedom’ became the choice of a single ethnocentric pre-configuration of both the political and economic realms, and not the desire on the part of individuals and groups for autonomy. As Eric Foner points out, ‘There is no sense that other people may have given thought to the question of freedom and arrived at their own conclusions’ (2003: 21). The utopianism inscribed in the Bush administration’s post-crisis narrative embedded a teleological vision of the world resulting in a ‘single model’. This was a ‘*hard*’ form of Hegelianism, rather than a ‘*softer*’ form which would have promoted a move away from tyranny to a destination established by the strategically selective agents within the political process being transformed; a move *towards* a utopian vision and not *away from* tyranny.

Within this scenario, ‘freedom’ implied the existence of intervention from the United States to help Middle Eastern regimes achieve the “single sustainable model”. This was a defining feature of the post-crisis narrative presented by the Bush administration, and applied as much to the conservative strategy it adopted, as it did to the radical strategy it had pursued in Iraq. Despite the diverse nature of programmes initiated by MEPI and the BMENA it was economic reform, exemplified in MEFTA, that provided the Freedom Agenda’s nucleus (see table 6). This was seen as a method of reforming the region and

delivering ‘good governance’, whilst ultimately providing a means to combat terrorism.

Thus, as President Bush declared,

*Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty. So I propose the establishment of a U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region* (Bush 2003\_05\_09).

The argument put forward by the Bush administration was that a lack of economic opportunities in the Middle East helped foster resentment towards Western affluence and generated conditions that favoured Islamist extremism. As a logical corollary, it was argued that,

The advance of freedom and peace in the Middle East would drain this bitterness and increase our own security ... The Arab world has a great cultural tradition, but is largely missing out on the economic progress of our time. *Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty* (Bush 2003\_05\_09).

Instructively, embedded within this vision was a notion that free trade and free markets would provide a mechanism for modernisation and ultimately the democratisation of the MENA<sup>126</sup>. The President was setting out the lessons he had learned at the ‘*West Point of capitalism*’, but articulating them through the prism of counter-terrorism: ‘We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror’ (Bush 2002\_03\_22). Moreover, as Colin Powell would declare when launching MEPI, ‘Hope begins with a paycheck’ (Powell 2002\_12\_12). Thus, the Freedom Agenda was proposing the model of the

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<sup>126</sup> Instructively this argument was not only put forward concerning the MENA, but was also applied to China in which the President argued that ‘the advance of markets and free enterprise helped to create a middle class that was confident enough to demand their own rights...Our commitment to democracy is tested in China...Yet, China's people will eventually want their liberty...China has discovered that economic freedom leads to national wealth. China's leaders will also discover that freedom is indivisible - that social and religious freedom is also essential to national greatness and national dignity. Eventually, men and women who are allowed to control their own wealth will insist on controlling their own lives and their own country’ (Bush 2003\_11\_06).

“Asian Tigers”<sup>127</sup>, to be implemented in the Middle East (see Wittes and Yerkes 2006b). The proposed economic strategy at the heart of the Bush administration’s conservative approach to the MENA consequently embodied a gradualist and sequential understanding of how political economy relates to democratisation in the region. This was the same theory of political change that was posited by candidate Bush in the 2000 presidential campaign, but as a result of the “9/11 crisis” had been applied to US-MENA relations. Modernity was seen as a single universal model in which democratisation was reachable through pursuing economic growth, and integrating the MENA into global markets (Lockman 2004: 133-140). Within this schema, economic freedom was being promoted because it was seen as a method of slowly loosening the statist grip that many authoritarian regimes have over their economies.

The promise of such a strategy was that it would create wealth that it was assumed would “trickle down” and produce a well educated middle class that would demand cultural changes favourable to democracy, such as increased secularism and therefore weaken the role of Islamic identities (see Grugel 2002: 47). This was the quintessential expression of modernisation thesis that lay at the heart of the Bush administration’s ideological-discursive formation. As a result, the “ideology of freedom” that the Bush administration presented drew an explicit connection between the MENA’s economic stagnation, its failure to democratise and terrorism. Consequently, recognition was given to the “demographic time bomb” MENA regimes face. For a typical regime in the region the unemployment rate is often in double digits and rises to above 20 percent. This is coupled with a growing number of young and fairly-well educated workers finding themselves without jobs (Lawrence 2006b: 13; Wittes 2008a: 30-55).

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<sup>127</sup> South Korea and Taiwan.

From such a diagnosis it became apparent that within the conservative side of Bush's Freedom Agenda, it too would adopt a neoliberal prognosis. MEPI reinforced this process by promoting economic reform and private sector development, with the aim of enhancing the region's competitiveness, encouraging investment, and facilitating the growth of private enterprise by creating a market-driven framework and private sector led economy <sup>128</sup> (USDS-BNEA 2003). Similarly, the BMENA initiative sought to support such activities through several small multilateral projects designed to assist the development of private enterprise and promote job training and literacy in the Middle East (Wittes and Yerkes 2006b: 8). Yet, ultimately it was MEFTA that personified the neoliberal agenda.

With other areas of the Freedom Agenda being rejected by MENA regimes, it became highly evident that by the time the Bush administration was leaving office it was in effect pursuing an 'economics-first' strategy. This prescribed standard market-orientated measures, which the US and international financial institutions have advocated around the world, such as increased privatisation, fiscal reform, banking reform, tax reform, and investment liberalisation (Carothers 2005: 198-200). Rather than challenging the political power of friendly regimes, the Bush administration was working with them to carefully and slowly create the conditions for reforming their autocracies. This was hardly the radical policy that the Bush administration described it to be, as in many ways it simply built on similar policies undertaken by the Clinton administration throughout the 1990s; such as the 1994 Gore-Mubarak Commission, the 1998 US-North Africa Economic Partnership (USNAEP), and in 1996 amended the 1985 US-Israel Free Trade Agreement to include the West Bank, Gaza and Qualified Industrial Zones in Jordan

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<sup>128</sup> This has been implemented on the ground through programmes such as the Partnership for Financial Excellence, Middle East Entrepreneur training, the Commercial Law Initiative, and the Middle East Finance Corporation.

(Dunne 2005: 210). The focus of these talks was very similar in emphasis to those being discussed under the MEFTA talks, with a focus on ‘dismantling and privatising statist economic structures, facilitating trade and foreign investment (including through accession to the WTO), and generating employment’ (Dunne 2005: 210; Lawrence 2006b). Such efforts demonstrate a notable continuity between the Clinton administration and G. W. Bush’s MEFTA initiative. To this extent, it is evident that the Bush administration’s democracy promotion rationale, which apparently broke with the past, drew significantly on the “one-size fits all” logic of the “Washington Consensus” in which *democracy* (mainly meaning elections), *open markets* (that follow the prescriptions of neoliberal economics), and *free trade* (within larger interdependent markets), all fit together and reinforce one another (Wiarda 1997: 16; Thomas 2005: 328-34; Williamson 2004; Goldgeier 2008a).

Moreover, as the Freedom Agenda became ‘watered-down’ and the Bush administration retreated, it became evident that what remained was an incoherent set of policies held together by a neoliberal core; economic reform was the order of the day and not directly challenging or necessitating serious political reform from friendly allies in the MENA. This was in effect a set of policies that friendly regimes in the MENA desired. As Robert Z. Lawrence argued,

[T]he US interest in MEFTA is not primarily economic. Rather it reflects geopolitical and security considerations. The MEFTA initiative reflects the judgement that US interests cannot be best advanced through purely military or political initiatives. To be effective in the battle for hearts and minds in the region the policy needs an economic component. By contrast, for Arab countries the interest in MEFTA is primarily economic (2006a: 2).

The appeal of this approach was located in the manner in which it created the illusion of favouring both parties. Middle Eastern regimes were able to accept such an agreement in



the belief that economic reforms would allow them to alleviate the poor social conditions that threaten their power. Whilst the US was able to pursue a strategy which many believed would dilute the appeal of Islamist groups and move the region slowly to stable, liberalised democracies. This apparently symbiotic relationship is appealing because of its gradualist emphasis in which the US need not directly challenge friendly regimes, consequently allowing cooperation to ensue on security and other economic concerns. In effect, it provided the default foundations upon which the Freedom Agenda's final iteration was constructed, by offering an illusionary 'silver bullet' to Middle East reform. Accordingly, it mirrors Edward Ingram's insight about pax-Americana, which favours 'trade and investment without rule whenever possible, but with rule when unavoidable' (2007: 7).

Whilst this neoliberal agenda was being marketed as a tool to modernise the MENA and fight terrorism, MEFTA was regarded by Robert B Zoellick as part of his 'competitive liberalisation strategy' (Magnusson 2003: 94). This strategy would be used to make an assault on protectionism, whilst countries eager for greater access to US markets would vie for Washington's attention and approval (Magnusson 2003: 94; Lawrence 2006b: 4-12). As this suggests, the US strategy was to utilise its economic means for political ends, making it a form of economic statecraft, because it pursued political goals through the use of economic instruments (see Hill 2003: 148-52). This strategy was highly significant for pursuing primacy in the Middle East because it sought to increase American influence in the region by creating interdependence between the US and Middle Eastern economies, therefore strengthening American hegemony. However, for the MENA's autocratic regimes this form of liberalisation has typically been part of a regime-driven survival strategy, which in the past allowed governments to avoid legitimisation crises by diffusing popular dissatisfaction. This apparently symbiotic

relationship provided the default foundations upon which the Freedom Agenda was constructed, demonstrating that whilst ‘democratisation’ was portrayed as being in the national interest, economic liberalisation inspired by modernisation thesis was seen by the Bush administration as the best way to achieve it.

### **Uncomfortable Bed Fellows: Between Democracy and Domination**

The aim of this research has not been to make predictions about the future of democratisation in the Middle East, as much as it has not been concerned with critiquing the future implications that the Freedom Agenda will have on the MENA region. Rather, the emphasis has been on ‘understanding’ and rendering apparent the ideological-discursive formation underpinning the Freedom Agenda. This in itself is seen as a political act, rather than having the author construct alternative definitions of ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ and juxtaposing them with those embodied within the Freedom Agenda. Notably, this has not been done, because it is recognised that these are essentially contested concepts and therefore the author is sceptical about whether this would have been a fruitful method of critique. Moreover, as a logical premise of a hermeneutic philosophy it is seen as best practise to understand what is being proposed, and therefore go beyond obfuscation, before attempting any fusion of horizons. The added value of this research is that it seeks to understand the Freedom Agenda from the moment of conception and therefore open up political dialogue for future debate. However, as a consequence, this research has been guilty of particularism, in that it has not drawn wider historical or philosophical inferences that can be generalised. Naturally, this is a product of the constructivist institutionalist approach, which instructs process-tracing of a particular post-crisis policy evolution and institutionalisation. Consequently, this author makes no apology for this research’s narrow focus.

Yet, before concluding this research it would be productive to make some cautious tentative steps at inferences that may guide future research on the Freedom Agenda. The first of which is philosophical, and which leads into the second which is historical and political. Thus, one of the defining features about the Freedom Agenda and the notion of ‘freedom’ that underpins its neoliberal emphasis, is that it falls into what Isaiah Berlin defined as a ‘positive’ conception of freedom. Indeed, using Berlin’s conceptions of negative and positive liberty as a heuristic tool is illustrative:

I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity ... If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved ... Coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I could otherwise act (Berlin 2006).

The implications of this are imperative as it can be argued that to the extent that the US favoured stability, and through doing so supported autocratic regimes with military and economic aid packages over popular opposition (whatever its form), the US was complicit in removing that population’s negative liberty under the rubric of American national interests. Consequently, the inhabitants of the MENA cannot be said to have negative liberty to the extent that the US intervenes in the area. Notably, this is the form of freedom that is undermined by the US desire for primacy over the region to secure its long term interests.

Yet, the US, through the Freedom Agenda, was offering the MENA a positive conception of liberty. Embedded in the Freedom Agenda’s teleological vision, was a rule structure that bestows a pattern of action of a certain kind<sup>129</sup>. Freedom was the name of an end-state; the ‘single sustainable model’ of democracy, development, free enterprise and free trade. The dangers of offering such a positive conception of liberty were strongly

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<sup>129</sup> For an excellent analysis of Berlin’s conception of positive liberty see Quentin Skinner’s *A Third Concept of Liberty* (2006: 243-65).

pronounced by Berlin, and are worth quoting at length:

The 'positive' and 'negative' notions of freedom historically developed in divergent directions ... until, in the end, they came into direct conflict with each other ... The perils of using organic metaphors to justify the coercion of some men by others in order to raise them to a 'higher' level of freedom have been pointed out ... we recognise that it is possible, and at times justifiable, to coerce men in the name of some goal ... which they would, if they were more enlightened, themselves pursue, but do not because they are blind or ignorant or corrupt. This renders it easy for me to conceive of myself as coercing others for their own sake, in their, not my, interest. I am then claiming that I know what they truly need better than they know it themselves ... Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name, and on behalf of their 'real' selves (2006: 44-5).

This is a prophetic vision of what happened in Iraq, not only through the adoption of neoliberal policy, but more profoundly in events in Abu Ghraib prison and beyond. More widely, what Berlin's distinction provides is a method of understanding the Freedom Agenda as stuck between a policy of domination and democracy. To accept that the US has a legitimate right to intervene in the region, especially to secure its own primacy, is to accept domination. Indeed, if one consults the etymological roots of the term *dominus* and *dominari*, a lord and to be lord over, such control can legitimately be termed domination. However, such a position is not contradictory if it is understood that the Freedom Agenda is based on a positive conception of liberty, in which freedom is not based on autonomy, but rather a pattern of action and an end state that is seen to be conducive to pax-Americana. The grand liberal strategy the Bush administration put forward can therefore be seen as a policy of ensuring primacy but also as propagating a positive conception of liberty. The strategy is caught between free trade as the positive route to liberty, and domination to the extent that negative liberty is undermined in favour of stability. The problem facing the Freedom Agenda, as inherited by the Obama administration, is therefore the extent to which this positive conception of freedom will be accepted or rejected by the people in the MENA region; will it be perceived as a neo-

colonial project, as indeed it was often asserted to be as presented by the Bush administration, or will some fusion of horizons occur? Ultimately it is too soon to tell, but it does appear that there is a rather uncomfortable tension between asserting American primacy over the region at the same time as attempting to increasing freedom/democracy/liberalisation; domination and ‘freedom’ are surely uncomfortable bed fellows as a long term project?

The contradiction between democracy and domination is not a new phenomenon in US foreign policy. It is as old as the United States’ first democratisation project carried out in the Philippines in 1892, when a policy of democratisation emerged as part of a compromise between proponents of an American empire and anti-imperialists (LaFeber 1994: 212-7; Schmidt 2005: 38-42). As Tony Smith maintains about the first democratisation project,

Imperialists could ... tout the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, while anti-imperialists could reassure themselves that the ideals of self-government would not be endangered ... the democratisation of the Philippines came to be the principle reason the Americans were there; now the United States had a moral purpose to its imperialism and could rest more easily ... democracy would become the moving faith of the forty-eight years of American control (1994: 43).

These genealogical origins are revealing, not only do they highlight the less than benign nature in which American foreign policy originally adopted democracy promotion as a strategy, but additionally the manner in which “democratisation” can be utilised as a discourse to justify a policy of subjugation, authority and rule.

This delivers us the second historical and political inference. At the time of the Bush administration leaving office, the Freedom Agenda had failed to deliver a single state in the MENA to the status of a full blown democratic transition. This is not to suggest that

this was a failure in and of itself, as the strategy was always regarded as long term 'generational' project. By its own criteria 'reform' was the prerogative with gradual modernisation the goal. Yet, the path that the Freedom Agenda has set may prove problematic precisely because of the neoliberal modernisation model at the heart of the project. The course that has been set strongly resembles what Barry Gills has termed 'low-intensity democracy' (see Gills, Rocamora, and Wilson 1993). Notably Gills points out that,

there may be a deep seated antagonism between the extension of American power through accelerated and intensified neoliberal economic globalisation and the realization of social progress through meaningful democratization. The economic policies pursued by the US tend to pre-configure the political, narrowing the range of regime type to a form called 'low-intensity democracy', which itself is a political form not necessarily conducive to real economic progress for the majority. Low-intensity democracy has, however, emerged as a characteristic political form of the post-cold war era, in which formal electoral democracy is promoted, but the transformatory capacity of democracy is limited in order to facilitate neoliberal economic policies (Gills 2000: 326).

Many authors have illustrated that low-intensity democracy has been a model adopted by many parts of the developing world (see Gills, Rocamora, and Wilson 1993: 127-257). With it, neoliberal policy has brought increased inequality, social polarisation and the predominant sum of the world's wealth being held by the few. Consequently economic power is concentrated, whilst labour is increasingly exploited. The prospects of such a scenario in the MENA is cause for great concern, not least because whilst the Freedom Agenda was marketed on the premise that it would deliver greater prosperity and security to the region and the world, it may in fact have laid the foundations for something radically different. Thus, whilst individuals such as Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* have argued that President Bush's 'aggressive engagement' should be backed as the best strategy for 'leading the Arab world into globalisation' (2003: 314-5), it is well worth ruminating on the implications of this through further research. If Gills is correct,

and the ‘simultaneity of economic liberalisation and democratisation creates particular problems of transition for all these societies and generally exacerbates the problems of maintaining social and political stability’ (2000: 331), then it would appear that even the final iteration of the Freedom Agenda, with its emphasis on a neoliberal economics first strategy, may need radical reform, if not complete abandonment.

## **Conclusion**

On January 15, 2009, a ceremony to commemorate the foreign policy achievements of the G. W. Bush administration was held in the Department of State's Benjamin Franklin Room. With President Bush sitting centre stage, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice declared that, 'today is a very special day. We are going to commemorate many of the achievements of our nation over the last eight years in furthering the Freedom Agenda' (Rice 2009\_01\_15). Not only was the Secretary of State highlighting the centrality of the Freedom Agenda to President Bush's tenure in office, but also to his Presidential legacy<sup>130</sup>. Moreover, this occasion was also used to make a series of claims about the Freedom Agenda policy. It was asserted that, 'over the past eight years' in the 'fog of events', the Bush administration was guided by 'principles' and a 'commitment to an unwavering belief in the power of freedom' (Rice 2009\_01\_15). As such, the Freedom Agenda was represented as the defining 'mission' of the Bush administration, which would endure because 'the support of human dignity and human liberty ... is as old as America itself' (Rice 2009\_01\_15). The Secretary of State also added that there were now, 'democratically elected leaders in Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Iraq', and that these countries 'have experienced a new birth of freedom ... Because when impatient patriots looked for support in their struggle for liberation, America and you, Mr. President, stood with them' (Rice 2009\_01\_15). The findings of this research problematise and challenge this "official" representation of the Freedom Agenda.

Whilst challenging the "official" representation of the Freedom Agenda is itself a

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<sup>130</sup> January 2009 marked a significant period, in which the Bush administration sought to defend its legacy. A significant part of this defence was the emphasis placed on the Freedom Agenda. Condoleezza Rice claimed that President Bush made the Freedom Agenda the 'hallmark of his presidency', adding that 'I think the United States of America is extraordinary in being a powerful country that has never sought and will never seek empire' (Rice 2009\_01\_16).



contribution to debate, this thesis also adds value to current literature in FPA, and has improved the debate concerning American democracy promotion in the MENA in three major areas. Firstly, it has developed a rigorous methodology that is capable of theorising and analysing post-crisis policy-making. Secondly, it has generated a greater understanding of how and why the Freedom Agenda was developed, by demonstrating the cumulative and evolutionary steps that led to its creation, following the construction of September 11, 2001 as a “crisis”. Thirdly, it has created a greater understanding of how the Freedom Agenda was constituted, by returning to first order questions and addressing what the Bush administration meant by the terms ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’, and how these definitions translated into a policy of conservative radicalism.

When this research into the Freedom Agenda began, its aim was to understand why members of the Bush administration were asserting the need to promote ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ as both a method of engaging with the MENA, and as a counter-terrorism strategy. Furthermore, this research wanted to explore what members of the Bush administration meant when they used such terms, and how this was being translated into policy. Consequently, a robust methodology was needed, as an aid for answering these questions. Such a methodology was developed, in the form of constructivist institutionalism, which was sensitive to the role of structure and agency, ideas and material, and continuity and change in Foreign Policy Analysis. By setting out an explicit set of ontological and epistemological foundations, to underpin this research, an ordering-framework was created that posited the need to focus on moments of crises, and trace the processes and narratives that emerge from them. Instructively, the constructivist institutionalist methodology itself represents a contribution to knowledge. It builds on contemporary trends in the study of foreign policy, and adds to debates concerning continuity and change. Indeed, whilst in this research the methodology was deployed in

the study of foreign policy, it could also be used to analyse post-crisis policy-making and institutional development in multiple disciplines across the social sciences<sup>131</sup>. Its strength lies in the fact that it is philosophically rigorous, has an interdisciplinary focus and is capable of theorising the complex processes of continuity and change in human affairs. Moreover, its ability to combine critical and historical analysis is a virtue, and with further development could prove to be an innovative method of producing alternative policy recommendations. The strengths of this methodology have come to fruition in this research, and have proved intrinsic its empirical focus and findings.

Notably, the constructivist institutionalist methodology was able to theorise the relationship between the events of September 11, 2001, and the development of the Freedom Agenda, rather than simply asserting a relationship based on their succession in time. This is a meaningful contribution, as it highlights the central role of September 11, 2001, and the manner in which it marked a moment of punctuation in US-MENA relations. The implications of this assertion are evident throughout this research. Accordingly, section three of this research, demonstrated how the 2000 Presidential campaign set the stage for the future Bush administration to outline a distinctive ideological-discursive formation. This appropriated and articulated primacy, hegemonic stability theory, neoliberalism and modernisation thesis into a distinctive formation, which in turn, sedimented particular definitions of concepts such as ‘power’, ‘peace’, ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’. The importance of this cannot be underestimated.

From January to September 2001, President Bush was asserting the need for continuity in US-MENA relations. The most prominent reform in this interregional relationship was

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<sup>131</sup> Having presented and discussed this methodology at multiple academic conferences, interest in this methodology has been registered from academics who study IR, European Studies, Development, Management Studies and Middle Eastern Studies.

Bush's decoupling strategy; vis-à-vis the peace process and Iraq. However, this situation changed as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, generating a moment of punctuation in political time. This moment of punctuation created a space for Bush's distinct ideological-discursive formation to be strategically embedded within a post-crisis narrative, which laid discursive tracks for the evolution of the Freedom Agenda. This post-crisis narrative foregrounded the concept of 'freedom' and asserted that America was attacked because it was 'free'. What was remarkable about such a depoliticising conclusion was the absence of detailed expansive studies into the "causes" of terrorism to justify this assertion. To deal with the uncertainty created as a result of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration primarily utilised logics arising out of the post-Cold War era, the perceived need for an overarching rationale for US foreign policy, and a re-constructed sense of America as 'exceptional'. That is to say, the form of change that followed the moment of punctuation was largely an endogenous product of how strategically selective actors viewed the strategically selective context. Consequently, it is safe to conclude that post-Cold War identity politics proved to be a critical dynamic in shaping the post-crisis narrative, and played a vital role in the eventual evolution of the Freedom Agenda.

Understanding the role of post-Cold War identity politics, allows a more generalisable point to be made. September 11, 2001 was not epochal and certainly did not, as the Bush administration argued, 'change everything' (see Dunmire 2009; Dobson 2006; Cole 2006). Rather, the nature of political change is more akin to that of a "kaleidoscope". Indeed, this is a metaphor deployed by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair in his response to September 11, 2001:

This is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us reorder this world around

us (Blair 2001\_10\_02).

This vignette is instructive because it captures a certain quality about political continuity and change that was evident in the process-tracing narrative discourse analysis carried out through this research. Namely, that discourses are important in the conduct of foreign policy, and when moments of punctuation occur, they can be re-constructed by articulating them into a different formation. This suggests that there is always a binding with the past, as these discourses have genealogies, but when placed in a different formation, through productive invention, they can lead to political change<sup>132</sup>. The Freedom Agenda was a product of exactly this sort of situation, in which a new strategically constituted narrative grasped together multiple factors to construct a plot. The Freedom Agenda was, to continue the metaphor, the Bush administration's attempt to reorder the MENA, as a consequence of 'the kaleidoscope being shaken', but the pieces within the kaleidoscope were there to be shaken in the first place.

Moreover, to understand the Freedom Agenda required reconstructing the context from which it arose, and fundamentally analysing the post-crisis narrative that guided its institutionalisation. From doing so, this research has demonstrated that the Freedom Agenda constituted a new policy paradigm in US-MENA relations, which was a product of a cumulative post-crisis policy-making process. Thus, events following September 11, were not analysed in this research based on the notion that 'history is just one damn thing after another', but rather, because events, such as the war in Afghanistan, the Bletchley II meeting, and the Iraq war, all added to how strategically selective actors viewed the

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<sup>132</sup> It is instructive here to recall the concluding words to John Maynard Keynes' *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, in which he asserts that, 'The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men [sic], who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen [sic] in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas' (1936: 383).

strategically selective context. As a result, what was considered feasible, practical and desirable changed, and out of this reformulation, the Freedom Agenda was perceived to be in America's national interest, and institutionalised as a new paradigm in US-MENA relations. The historical narrative presented in this research, therefore demonstrates that policy evolves over time as policy-makers try to solve policy puzzles in conditions of uncertainty. Consequently, they develop and deploy specific ideological-discursive formations (embedded within narratives) to support their strategic actions, and legitimate the policy directions they have constructed within institutional settings.

Policy-making is not, however, a perfect "science". Herein, despite the Bush administration attempting to make democracy promotion *the* central objective of US-MENA relations, both in the form of creating a domino effect after the Iraq war and through the Freedom Agenda institutions, it became clear that the new paradigm was problematic. Whilst the administration gradually recognised that the war on terror could not be fought through military means alone, promoting democracy in the MENA proved to be more difficult than the Bush administration had originally conceived. In the belief that 'freedom' was a universal value, and the natural political arrangement societies would adopt if authoritarian rule was removed, the Bush administration lowered the bar of how difficult promoting democracy in the MENA would be. Indeed, with a growing insurgency in Iraq, and the democratic victory of Hamas in the 2006, it was clear that the Freedom Agenda was all but abandoned by the Bush administration. This was the case in spite of the Bush administration claiming that it had pursued the agenda throughout its tenure in office, and that "freedom" had been the administration's loadstar. The Freedom Agenda was consequently unable to provide an overarching rationale for the war on terror, and was certainly not akin to containment in the Cold War era, despite President Bush attempting to make realise this ambition in his second term in office.

As this research has demonstrated, US-MENA relations became characterised by a policy of conservative radicalism. The Freedom Agenda, as a result was strongly committed to regional stability and the gradual reform of ally regimes, whilst seeking to challenge regimes hostile to the US. This realisation adds to the existing debate about the Freedom Agenda, because it generates a more complex understanding of the policy, and consequently moves the debate forward. Indeed, the Bush administration's vision for the Middle East is made considerably clearer once it is acknowledged that the United States sought to promote democracy because it believed that this would tip the global "balance of power" in America's favour and subsequently assure continued US preponderance and ascendancy. It was not democracy in and of itself that was being advocated, but rather, democracy that would suit perceived American interests. By highlighting the conservative radicalism dyad, this research illustrates a fundamental tension in US-MENA relations; September 11th may have changed the manner in which the US viewed the Middle East, but it merely compounded the perceived need for short-term cooperation in the pursuit of other more immediate security goals. Where this occurred, the Bush administration consistently gave priority to the latter. Consequently, this research has demonstrated that the Freedom Agenda was contradictory at best, and, at worst, a legitimating concept for the pursuit of US preponderance over the MENA. It was ultimately a policy caught between pursuing democracy and domination. The implications of this clearly demonstrate that, despite the constant repetition of the word "freedom", which became the trope of the war on terror, elevated to chief purveyor of legitimacy and idol of the tribe, it was necessary to look past this essentially contested term and return to first order questions about how the Freedom Agenda was constituted. Undertaking this task was robustly aided by the constructivist institutionalism methodology.

Accordingly, section four of this research explicitly addressed how the Freedom Agenda was constituted. Its findings clearly demonstrate that the Bush administration overstated the centrality of the Freedom Agenda in US-MENA relations. The narrative presented by the White House, obfuscated the degree to which there were tensions in the administration over the institutionalisation of the Freedom Agenda. Indeed, the “official” narrative wrote out the extent to which members of the Department of Defense and Department of State were hostile to the Freedom Agenda. This was a particularly fecund finding of this research, as it reveals how the ‘conflict of interest’ problem was difficult for the administration to address. Moreover, it demonstrates how a mismatch between regional specialist and the growing democracy bureaucracy, proved to be an obstacle in coordinating and entrenching the Freedom Agenda paradigm. Herein, it is safe to conclude that despite the President’s grand rhetoric, a more complex reality was unfolding within the administration itself, which is certainly an area for further study<sup>133</sup>. The constructivist institutionalist methodology would be well equipped at taking this research forward and dealing with this dynamic, by introducing a distinction between ‘master’ and ‘sectoral’ discourses, which would compare the “official” narrative with that produced by specialists in the democracy bureaucracy (see Schmidt 2000). This would allow a much more detailed assessment of how effectively the “official” narrative and policy formulation translated at a policy-practitioner level.

This is not to say that this research has not contributed to the debate in this area. Carrying out this research has revealed a more generalisable issue about US democracy

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<sup>133</sup> My intention was to conduct this research as part of this study. However, due to access issues outlined in chapter six this was not undertaken. Given the change of administrations, it is my intention to attempt to carryout this research in the future, and contact individuals that may now be willing to be interviewed. Moreover, with the expected publication of memoirs by Carl Rove, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld there will certainly be more information made available over the coming years regarding this issue.

promotion. Namely, that the US struggles to promote democracy, because it is not clear how best to do so. This accounts for the ad hoc programmes the Freedom Agenda institutions pursued, and was reflected in J. Scott Carpenter's assertion that 'we don't know yet how best to promote democracy ... there are times when you throw spaghetti against the wall and see if it sticks' (in Finkel 2005: see chapter eleven). Despite this insight, however, it was unambiguously clear that the Bush administration relied on ideological convictions, rather than detailed empirical subscriptions, in its assertions that the democratisation process could be brought about by subscribing to neoliberal reforms and modernisation thesis. Whilst it is too early to assess the consequences of this gradualist economics-first approach, it is clear that there are both philosophical and practical problems with this strategy. Moreover, in light of the global 'Banking Crisis' that took hold in the final throws of the Bush administration's tenure in office, it would be prudent to conduct further studies to see what effects this has had on the region given that MEFTA increased the MENA region's exposure to global markets. Indeed, whilst literature on the adoption of neoliberal logics in Iraq has been sparse, even fewer studies have been undertaken into the impact of MEFTA.

Thus, despite the Bush administration's tenure in office having been completed, the importance of further analysis into the Freedom Agenda remains. Whilst President Obama has signalled a more pragmatic approach to dealing with the MENA, and played down calls to pursue the Freedom Agenda, his administration has accepted the link between democracy promotion and fighting terror (see Hassan 2009). Moreover, in President Obama's June 4, 2009 speech in Cairo, it was clear that the new administration was adopting a similar vernacular to that of his predecessor, emphasising democracy promotion as a product of "partnerships" with Middle Eastern regimes (Obama 2009\_06\_04). Evidently, the institutional legacy of the Freedom Agenda has been



inherited by the Obama administration, and the findings of this research therefore remain pertinent to American foreign policy. By generating a greater understanding of the Freedom Agenda's construction, this research has not only added value the debate concerning Bush's Freedom Agenda, but will further inform this debate to the extent that the Obama administration chooses to continue down the path of the Freedom Agenda's institutional legacy.

## **Tables Overview:**

**Table 1:** MEPI Pillars, Objectives and Focus

**Table 2:** Examples of MEPI Programme Activities in Practice

**Table 3:** Requested and Actual MEPI Funding FY2002- FY2009

**Table 4:** Status of US-MEFTA Efforts as of January 2009

**Table 5:** Sample of Binary Identity Constructions Deployed by the Bush Administration

**Table 6:** Areas addressed by the Freedom Agenda

## **Tables:**

**Table 1: MEPI Pillars, Objectives and Focus (Compiled from MEPI 2008)**

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Focus</b>
<b>Political Pillar</b>	To develop institutions and processes that are essential to active citizenries and accountable, representative governments. Programmes bring NGOs, governments and citizens together to push the boundaries of change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Elections and Political Process.</li><li>▪ Civil Society and Reform Advocacy.</li><li>▪ Media.</li><li>▪ Rule of Law.</li></ul>
<b>Economic Pillar</b>	Focusing on region wide economic and employment growth driven by private sector expansion and entrepreneurship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Investment.</li><li>▪ Entrepreneurship.</li><li>▪ Trade/Transparency.</li></ul>
<b>Education Pillar</b>	To support education systems that enable all people, especially girls, to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in today's economy and improve the quality of their lives and those of their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Access.</li><li>▪ Quality.</li><li>▪ Skills Development.</li></ul>
<b>Women's Pillar</b>	To support local NGOs and Women reformers in the MENA in their effort to achieve full participation in society. This pillar focuses on addressing cultural, legal, regulatory, economic and political barriers that women encounter in their daily lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Women and the Law.</li><li>▪ Women in Democracy.</li><li>▪ Women's rights.</li><li>▪ Women's economic empowerment.</li></ul>

**Table 2: Examples of MEPI Programme Activities in Practice (Compiled from MEPI 2005)**

Pillar	Activities
<b>Political</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased the transparency of Lebanon's elections in 2005 through targeted technical and material support to domestic monitoring organisations, voter education, journalists, and candidates.</li> <li>Provided support to over 2,000 domestic election monitors for Egypt's first multi-candidate election.</li> <li>Supporting the only live satellite broadcasts of Arab parliamentary sessions.</li> <li>Supporting national and local political party organisations and their members in countries that will have new rounds of municipal and parliamentary elections in 2005-2007.</li> <li>Strengthening the role of civil society in the democratic process by facilitating dialogue among activists, NGOs, and foreign ministers at G8/BMENA meetings and by awarding more than 70 indigenous civil society organisations with direct grants.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrepreneurial training for more than 180 participants from 16 Middle East and North African countries. Almost half were women. Twenty alumni have started or expanded businesses. At least 150 new jobs have been created.</li> <li>Extended credit and services to small- and medium-sized businesses through peer consultation and training for regional banks and financial organisations.</li> <li>Established self-sustaining Junior Achievement chapters in 12 countries throughout the Middle East - over 10,000 students have participated. Created public-private partnerships that assisted in the sustainability of Junior Achievement chapters.</li> <li>Expanded trade capacity of Arab countries with training and technical assistance; a number of Gulf countries are drafting new labour laws and updating import/export agricultural standards.</li> <li>Created the first-ever Business Women's Summit for Middle Eastern businesswomen. Two hundred women from 16 Middle East and North Africa countries and eight American businesswomen attended. A new Middle East and North Africa Business Women's Network was created by the attendees.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing English language study to over 1,500 underserved youth from 13 countries in the Middle East through a micro-scholarship programme. As a result of the programme's initial success, the programme size is being increased to reach 13,000 people, with an added focus on civic responsibility.</li> <li>Translated over 80 children's book titles into Arabic and providing more than a million new books to the Middle East through the first-ever effort to use classroom libraries to develop independent reading, critical thinking, and analytical skills in young people.</li> <li>Developing new English as a Foreign Language and on-line civic education curricula for grades K-12 through public-private</li> </ul>

	<p>partnership among global and local businesses, governments, and NGOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering young, highly motivated Arab men and women with leadership, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial skills through intensive five-week institutes. More than 135 students have participated, and many started their own projects back at home.</li> <li>• Demonstrating creative, innovative solutions to education challenges through "Partnership Schools" that offer quality and relevant education alternatives for children and serve as models for governments as they address additional educational challenges in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising the political, advocacy, and communication skills of women candidates through innovative Regional Campaign Schools attended by over 300 women from the Middle East and North Africa.</li> <li>• Providing regional micro-enterprise and business internships for women that include a one-month executive MBA programme and a three-month internship at Fortune 500 businesses; 42 women from 16 countries in the region have attended so far.</li> <li>• Building a professional network for Arab women legal professionals, which offers professional development training programmes, policy roundtables, mentoring, and a resource directory.</li> <li>• Published the first-of-its-kind comprehensive survey and analysis on the status of women's freedom in 17 countries and territories in the Middle East.</li> <li>• Empowering grassroots women's NGOs across the region through targeted training on advocacy, negotiation, outreach and communication skills to build foundations for democratic reform.</li> <li>• Providing training for judges and legal professionals on issues ranging from the family code to domestic violence and honour killings.</li> </ul>

**Table 3:** Requested and Actual MEPI Funding FY2002- FY2009 (See McInerney 2008) *Figures are in US \$ Millions*

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Cumulative Actual Total</b>
<b>FY2002</b>	---	29	---
<b>FY2003</b>	---	90	119
<b>FY2004</b>	145	89.5	208.5
<b>FY2005</b>	150	74.4	282.9
<b>FY2006</b>	120	114.4	397.3
<b>FY2007</b>	120	50.8	448.1
<b>FY2008</b>	75	49.6	497.7

**Table 4:** Status of US-MEFTA Efforts as of January 2009 (Updated from USTR 2006)

*Note: The Palestinian Authority Participates in the US-Israel FTA.*

Country	FTA	TIFA	BIT	WTO	GSP
Israel	√	√	√	√	Not Eligible
Jordan	√	√	√	√	√
Morocco	√	√	√	√	√
Bahrain	√	√	√	√	Not Eligible
Egypt	Suspended Negotiation January 2006	√	√	√	√
Lebanon		√		Negotiating Accession	√
Algeria		√		Negotiating Accession	√
Tunisia		√	√	√	√
Saudi Arabia		√		√	Not Eligible
Oman	√	√		√	√
Kuwait		√		√	Not Eligible
UAE	Suspended Negotiation March 2007	√		√	Not Eligible
Yemen		√		Negotiating Accession	√
Qatar		√		√	Not Eligible
Syria					Not Eligible
Iraq		√		Negotiating Accession	√
Libya				Negotiating Accession	Not Eligible
Iran				Negotiating Accession	Not Eligible

**Table 5: Sample of Binary Identity Constructions Deployed by the Bush Administration**

Note: This list of adjectives is by no means exhaustive, but rather provides an attributive vernacular that essentialised the identities of the “terrorists” and “America”(see Bush 2001\_09\_11b, 2001\_09\_11c, 2001\_09\_12a, 2001\_09\_12b, 2001\_09\_14, 2001\_09\_18, 2001\_09\_20, 2001\_10\_07, 2001\_11\_08).

Description of “Terrorists”	Description of “America”
Terrorists	Liberators
Evil	Good
Tyrannical	Free
Unjust	Just
Barbaric/ Uncivilised	Progressive/ Civilised
Violent	Peaceful
Cowardly	Daring/ Brave/ Heroic/ Courageous
Weak	Strong
Intolerant	Tolerant
Cruel	Kind
Brutal	Loving
Indifferent	Caring
Mad	Reasonable

**Table 6: Areas addressed by the Freedom Agenda (From Wittes and Yerkes 2006a: 6)**

Programme	Political Reform	Economic Reform	Educational Reform	Women’s Empowerment
Middle East Free Trade Area	✓	✓		
Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative	✓	✓	✓	
Democracy Assistance Programmes (MEPI, DRL, USAID)	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ =Core Programme focus.

✓ =Conceptual commitment no-programming.

## **Appendices Overview:**

**Appendix 1:** Visa Letter

**Appendix 2:** Free Nodes Creation

**Appendix 3:** Free Nodes List

**Appendix 4:** Tree Node Example

## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Visa Letter

Available on request.

Appendix 2: Free Nodes Creation

Note: This is an example of the software program NVivo 8, in which free nodes can be created. In the left-hand column is a 'text', in this case a speech by President G. W. Bush, and in the right-hand column is a list of free nodes that correspond to a categorisation of the text. These were created by the author. This coding process proved invaluable in the process-tracing narrative discourse analysis, as it allowed large amounts of qualitative data to be processed and retrieved.



The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. The main window shows a text document titled "1999\_09\_23 Citadel Period of consequences (G.W. Bush)". The text is highlighted in yellow, indicating it has been coded. The right-hand pane shows a list of free nodes, which are categories created by the user to organize the data. The nodes are listed vertically and include:

- American Purpose
- Military Transformation
- Threat search
- Freedom Search
- Peace search
- Dignity
- Power Military, economic or cultural
- Peace (Future)
- America Influential
- Threat
- North Korea
- Offense and defence
- Power
- Opportunity
- With us or against us
- VM&T error
- Iran research
- Coding Density

The bottom status bar indicates "Nodes: 74 References: 130 Read-Only Line: 1 Column: 0".

### Appendix 3: Free Nodes List

Note: The virtue of creating free nodes is that they are listed in the NVivo programme, and therefore provide an overview of the qualitative data. The programme also complies information about how many times a free node appears throughout the data sample. This allowed the author to evaluate changes in the discourse over time.

PhD Narrative Analysis May08.nvp - NVivo

File Edit View Go Project Links Code Tools Window Help

New

Code All

Nodes

Free Nodes

Tree Nodes

Cases

Relationships

Matrices

Search Folders

All Nodes

Sources

Nodes

Sets

Queries

Models

Links

Classifications

Folders

Look for:

Search In:

Free Nodes

Find Now

Clear

Options

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Change	31	48	05/27/2008 17:14	OH	03/13/2009 14:19	OH
Change (Temporal)	20	31	02/16/2009 17:35	OH	03/08/2009 23:23	OH
Change Bureaucratic	9	10	02/16/2009 18:01	OH	03/11/2009 01:38	OH
Chechnya	1	1	03/10/2009 01:53	OH	03/10/2009 01:53	OH
China	3	5	02/23/2009 18:34	OH	03/07/2009 14:49	OH
China as rival not partner	1	1	01/22/2009 17:16	OH	01/22/2009 17:16	OH
Churchill	1	1	03/08/2009 14:53	OH	03/08/2009 14:53	OH
Civil WAR	3	4	03/08/2009 17:17	OH	03/10/2009 18:09	OH
Civilisations fight	36	56	08/25/2005 13:19	OH	03/11/2009 00:13	OH
Cold War narrative	8	16	02/23/2009 16:20	OH	03/13/2009 14:05	OH
Community	1	1	02/19/2009 18:31	OH	02/19/2009 18:31	OH
compassionate conservatism	5	7	01/23/2009 12:38	OH	03/09/2009 00:01	OH
Corruption	6	6	02/13/2009 15:54	OH	03/02/2009 00:16	OH
Confronting national security issu	2	3	08/23/2005 15:33	OH	05/12/2008 17:16	OH
Consequences	17	22	01/30/2009 15:18	OH	03/11/2009 01:37	OH
Continuity	7	7	02/17/2009 16:41	OH	03/10/2009 23:10	OH
Cost	1	1	02/20/2009 18:34	OH	02/20/2009 18:34	OH
CPA	2	2	03/07/2009 20:21	OH	03/08/2009 18:12	OH
Crime or war	1	1	08/25/2005 13:05	OH	02/16/2009 16:51	OH
Crime- terror	1	1	03/07/2009 22:30	OH	03/07/2009 22:30	OH
Criminal investigation	1	1	08/25/2005 12:04	OH	05/12/2008 17:16	OH
Crisis	1	1	02/26/2009 16:03	OH	02/26/2009 16:03	OH
Danger (Future)	14	18	01/30/2009 14:37	OH	03/11/2009 00:16	OH
Dangerous World (Present)	14	17	02/03/2009 16:33	OH	03/11/2009 01:39	OH
Decade of defiance	2	3	08/28/2005 13:51	OH	02/26/2009 16:24	OH
Democracy	15	18	01/28/2009 15:23	OH	03/10/2009 04:05	OH
Democracy Definition	28	48	02/21/2009 12:14	OH	03/11/2009 00:24	OH
Democracy History	1	1	03/07/2009 14:14	OH	03/07/2009 14:14	OH
Democracy Iraq led	14	22	03/03/2009 02:41	OH	03/11/2009 01:19	OH
democracy post cold war	3	3	05/26/2006 13:26	OH	02/23/2009 18:49	OH
Democracy Promotion	53	111	08/24/2005 11:44	OH	03/11/2009 01:26	OH
Democracy Trade Freedom	20	33	01/30/2009 14:30	OH	03/11/2009 01:43	OH
Democracy Young	1	1	03/05/2009 16:40	OH	03/05/2009 16:40	OH
Democratic desire	1	1	03/10/2009 16:44	OH	03/10/2009 16:44	OH
Democratic faith	2	4	08/24/2005 13:47	OH	02/23/2009 18:49	OH
Democratic peace	27	41	01/22/2009 15:54	OH	03/11/2009 01:41	OH

OH - 395 items

## Appendix 4: Tree Node Example

Note: Once free nodes have been created they can be put into hierarchical tree nodes. These are made by the author and represent models of how ideas are connected. In this example the tree node was titled “Representations of American Identity”, and accumulated the multiple free nodes that described “America” and “Americans”. Free nodes such as “American Exceptionalism”, “America Innocent”, “Victim-hood” and “Liberators” were included within the tree node.

Nodes

Free Nodes

Tree Nodes

Cases

Relationships

Matrices

Search Folders

All Nodes

Sources

Nodes

Sets

Queries

Models

Links

Classifications

Folders

Look for:

Search In

Tree Nodes

Find Now

Clear

Options

X

Tree Nodes

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Representations of American Identity	0	0	05/27/2008 21:54	OH	05/27/2008 21:54	OH
A better future fo	2	2	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America as Liber	28	38	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America can achi	4	4	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America Indepen	11	13	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America Influent	6	9	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America is great	12	17	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America reluctan	19	22	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America Safer	2	2	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America Unsafe	2	2	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
America will act	3	3	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Defens	3	3	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Engag	1	1	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American excepti	2	2	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Except	3	4	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Leader	28	37	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Metho	2	5	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Purpos	7	10	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Story	11	13	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
American Weakn	2	3	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
Americans Role i	10	13	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
An American Ce	3	3	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
Anti appeaseme	10	11	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
Anti-Imperialism	22	30	03/14/2009 14:48	OH	03/14/2009 14:48	OH
Awakening	1	1	03/14/2009 14:50	OH	03/14/2009 14:50	OH
Benevolence	2	2	03/14/2009 14:50	OH	03/14/2009 14:50	OH
Civilisations fight	36	56	03/14/2009 14:50	OH	03/14/2009 14:50	OH
Democratic faith	2	4	03/14/2009 14:52	OH	03/14/2009 14:52	OH
Freedom	75	182	03/14/2009 14:53	OH	03/14/2009 14:53	OH
Freedom from fe	1	1	03/14/2009 15:02	OH	03/14/2009 15:02	OH
History and liber	18	30	03/14/2009 15:02	OH	03/14/2009 15:02	OH
History understa	31	56	03/14/2009 15:02	OH	03/14/2009 15:02	OH
How we will fight	1	1	03/14/2009 15:02	OH	03/14/2009 15:02	OH
Idealism	13	18	03/14/2009 15:02	OH	03/14/2009 15:02	OH
Ideals and Intere	13	15	03/14/2009 15:02	OH	03/14/2009 15:02	OH

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