Intervention and Regime Change in Bush’s and Obama’s Foreign Policies: Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya

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ABSTRACT

If Bush believed in unilateral imposition of regime change to Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11, Obama, in contrast, thinks that, despite the humanitarian multilateral intervention to Libya authorized by UNSC, regime change is a task for the Libyan people themselves. While the Bush Doctrine established that exporting democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq would make the United States safer and was the best guarantee of American interests, Obama’s strategy indicated that American troops were only to protect the Libyan people from immediate danger and to establish a no-fly zone. This paper will highlight the role of democracy and its counterpart security in those contrasting strategies, aiming to answer which one is more likely to be successful. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the speeches of Bush, Obama and their Secretaries of State and Defense will provide the empirical data. The reference literatures are those of democratization and of the foreign imposed regime change (FIRC).


I. INTRODUCTION

If Bush believed in unilateral imposition of regime change to Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11, Obama, in contrast, thought that, despite the humanitarian multilateral intervention to Libya authorized by UNSC, regime change is a task for the Libyan people themselves. While the Bush Doctrine established that exporting democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq would make the United States safer and was the best guarantee of American interests, Obama’s strategy indicated that American troops were only to

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protect the Libyan people from immediate danger and to establish a no-fly zone. These contrasting strategies point to different defense and foreign policies and the consequential divergent motivations and justifications to invade target countries. Both strategies, moreover, emphasize distinct principles that serve as pillars of the foreign policy doctrines in the post-cold war period.

This paper will highlight the role of democracy and its counterpart security in both Bush and Obama strategies, aiming to identify and clarify their above pointed differences. We argue that while democracy plays an essential role in the Bush Doctrine, Obama’s grand strategy is less clear as far as the emphasis on democracy vis-à-vis security is concerned.

Qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the speeches of Bush and his Secretaries of State and Defense as well as Obama’s will provide the empirical data. The reference literatures are those of democratization and of the foreign imposed regime change (FIRC).

In this paper democratic values and American interests are not seen as contradictory in the post-cold war period for the very reason that neither a great part of the democratization-literature authors nor policy-makers see them as such. Quite on the contrary, for them national interests are best served by democratic values in a democratic milieu. It is true that Obama in some instances privileged interests over democratic values, as it will be seen below.¹

The first section of this paper refers to the importance of external vis-à-vis internal variables in the democratization process as seen by the democratization literature and policy-makers. It will as well bring the contribution of the foreign imposed regime change literature (FIRC) that assesses the efficacy of promoting democracy abroad by the use of force. Next, the pillars of the foreign policy doctrines in the post-cold war period will be briefly presented. The third deals with the Bush Doctrine and Obama’s defense policy, analyzing the links between democracy and security in each strategy and their relation to the pillars of the foreign policy doctrines. Finally the last section will

¹ In a previous work we referred in more detailed to the debate over the possible opposition between interest and values (cf. The Essential Role of Democracy in the Bush Doctrine, paper presented to the 36th Meeting of the National Association for Research and Graduate Studies (ANPOCS), Águas de Lindóia, São Paulo, October 21-25, 2012, pp.15-17)
focus on the motives and justifications of the military invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq on the one had, and in Libya on the other. In the conclusions, we will address the question of which strategy, if any, is more likely to successfully export democracy: Bush’s or Obama’s?

The results presented in this work are still partial, inasmuch as the speeches of Obama’s Secretaries of State and Defense were not considered here due to time constraints.

II. EXTERNAL VARIABLES IN THE EXPORTING OF DEMOCRACY, THE UNIVERSALITY OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND THE EFFICACY OF FOREIGN IMPOSED REGIMES CHANGE

Foreign policy decision-makers must believe in the greater importance of external vis-à-vis internal variables in the democratization process. They must believe, moreover, in the universality of the democratic values and therefore that democracy is not historically or culturally bound, but on the contrary, it can thrive everywhere. Let us very briefly review what the democratization literature tells us about these matters.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES

The American victory in the Cold War reinforced the belief in the universality of the values and principles of the Western liberal democracy and, therefore, that all the peoples in the world want to be democratic. Shared by decision-makers and social scientists alike, this belief was strongly backed up by the influential ideas of Fukuyama (1989,1992), who faced the non-less important critique by Huntington (1996), who, by his turn, spoke of a multicultural world where cleavages along cultural and religious lines would put obstacles to democratization especially in Confucian and Islamic societies.

For sure, all the Presidents of the post-Cold War period believed that the triumph in the Cold War was a proof of the superiority of democracy over communism and that there was no other system of values and principles in the world that could rival with “the wisdom of our nation’s founders” (Bush Father, State of the Union, 1991). All of them
rejected Huntington’s, so to speak, cultural warning in their speeches in various occasions and in various ways. So did their Secretaries of State and Defense.²

Coming to the Bush administration, it certainly would be impossible to take the decision to militarily invade two Islamic countries and there establish democracies without very clearly rejecting Huntington’s thesis. In fact, in his speech of the State of Union in 2004 Bush said:

> We also hear doubts that democracy is an unrealistic goal for the greater Middle East, where freedom is rare. Yet it is mistaken and condescending to assume that whole cultures and great religions are incompatible with liberty and self-government. I believe that God has planted in every human heart the desire to live in freedom. And even when that desire is crushed by tyranny for decades, it will rise again. (George W. Bush, State of Union, 2004)

Colin Powell, referring to Iraq, affirmed that the United States would there fight terrorism with all national power elements, but above all, with a value system that:

> (...) is still respected around the world, a value system that has fueled this nation for so many hundred of years and is fueling so many other nations around the world, a value system that says democracy works and it is not restricted to western cultures or to the United States. (Colin Powell, Speech at the Institute of Peace on US efforts to assist the people of Iraq, Washington, 2004)

Therefore, the Secretary of the State added in another speech: “There’s no reason that democracy can’t work in Afghanistan (...)” (Remarks at the Southern Center for International Studies. Atlanta, Georgia, October, 2004).

Donald Rumsfeld, Bush’s first Secretary of Defense goes in the same direction:

> Freedom is the birthright of every American. We know that to be so. But it is the birthright as well of every person, a gift of God, given to all but denied to many by tyrants, by dictators who place their own power above human dignity and even human life. To those millions in those places, America is truly the light of liberty and the hope of the world. This is something we’ve always known to be true. (Patriot Day Observance, September 11, 2003)

Obama does not differ from his predecessor on that matter:

> [W]e believe that freedom and self-determination are not unique to one culture. These are not simply American values or Western values, they are universal values. (Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 25, 2012)

² Cf, Castro Santos, 2010, op. cit.
Secretary of State Hilary Clinton expresses the same belief in the universal values of democracy:

[W]e have to continue to advance American values, which correspond with universal values. I’m always reminding my counterparts that when I talk about freedom of expression, freedom of religion, those are not just American values… And we’re going to stand up for them, and it’s not always easy and we have to pick our times.

If “democracy is not restricted to western cultures” and if therefore there is no reason for it not to work in Afghanistan and Iraq or in Libya for that matter, it still remains to be answered the following questions: how much do external vis-à-vis internal variables influence the construction of democracy? Can democracy be imposed from outside? To deal with these questions we will resort to the democratization and FIRC literatures.

HOW MUCH DO EXTERNAL VARIABLES MATTER?

The first generation of the democratization literature, which examined the cases of South Europe in the 70’s and of South America’s in the next decade, considered that domestic factors played a role much more important than external variables in the democratization process. This consensus was broken with the democratic transitions of the communist countries in the 90’s, when external stimuli were prominent.

Farer (1996), an author of the exporting of democracy literature, says that foreign actors can contribute a great deal to the defense and strengthening of democracy and that after the Cold War the tolerance for external interventions grew significantly. Huntington (1996), however, warns that even when external factors create favorable conditions for democracy building this will only occur if domestic conditions exist – adequate level of economic development and political leadership compromised with democratic values.

Whitehead (2005) contests the downplaying of the external-variables influence in democracy building stated by the first generation literature arguing that this generation came to that conclusion because it based its analysis on transitions that occurred inside the limits of Westphalian-consolidated states. However, the post-Cold War democratic transitions occurred many times in weak and vulnerable states, with numerous fragmentations processes. In those cases, says the author, “international factors can be

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3 The basic reference is O’Donnell and Schmitter (1988).
expected to play a stronger and more directive role in democratization” (p.6). A typical pattern is the military imposition of democracy after short wars, among which Whitehead includes what he calls Western interventions in Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2003).

Summing up, if there is no consensus in the literature about the importance of external variables in democratization, one can say that starting the communist-countries transitions in the years 1990, the significant influence of these variables on democracy building came to be recognized, although in different degrees.

This is an academic backup of great importance for the foreign-policy and defense-policy decision-makers who decide to export democracy by the use of force. They must believe and make their people believe that the American military interventions, even if unilateral, are efficacious when it comes to the crafting of democracy.

The Bush administration was for sure a believer in the capacity of military intervention for opening the way to build democracy in the two rogue states invaded by the United States in his government: Afghanistan and Iraq. Iraq

Obama certainly does not approve nor adopted Bush strategy for the exporting of democracy by the use of force. He called frequently on humanitarian assistance to justify American military intervention in Libya civil war, but no doubt he was hoping to tilt the balance of power toward the rebels side, i. e., the side of democracy (cf. State of the Union, January 2012).

But how stable are the foreign imposed democratic institutions?

THE STABILITY OF THE FOREIGN IMPOSED REGIMES CHANGE

The question of whether democratic states can effectively impose democracy abroad is a typical research question of the foreign imposed regime change (FIRC) literature. The democratic FIRC is particularly important for American foreign policy in the post-cold war period.

For Downes (2010), foreign imposed regime change
is the removal of the effective political leader of a state at the behest of the government of another state. Interveners typically also empower a new leader and sometimes impose a set of new institutions, but all that is required for a case to qualify as FIRC is if an external actor displaces the political leader of the target state. (p.5)

Peic and Reiter (2010) provide a definition that includes the change of leaders and political institutions as well:

The term ‘regime’ has been used by scholars sometimes to refer to a leader and some times to refer to political institutions. Foreign imposed regime change, therefore, can mean an externally imposed change in either leaders or political institutions, though in practice it is often both. (p.454)

Downes and Monten (2010) focus specifically in FIRCs by democratic countries, which is the focus of this paper. Their basic research question is whether intervention is an effective means of spreading democracy. Claiming that there is no consensus answer to this question, they see the debate divided between optimists, pessimists and those who make conditional arguments.

Among the optimists are foreign and defense policies policy-makers. In the sections above we indicated that Bush and Obama administrations think that democracy is transferable to any society or culture and that external variable have a positive effect in the democratization process. This would is true regardless of poverty, ethnic fractioning or absence of democratic experience in the target countries, especially if enough time and resources are given to nation-building operations. Downes and Monten (2010) point to some empirical support to the optimist view in the academic research literature. In fact, some authors of this vein claim that military interventions are often necessary to remove abusive political and military institutions (cf. for instance Bermeo, 2003). Others qualify this assertion suggesting that military interventions have a positive effect on democratization only if the objective of these interventions was explicitly to democratize the target countries (see for example Meerrnik, 1996 and Perceney,1999).

More recent studies, however, stress that success in imposing democracy by the use of force is not only rare but it might be counterproductive as well. Frequently cited is the study of Bueno de Mesquita and Down (2006). They found that be the intervener the UN, the United States or other democracy, the target countries experience no significant increase in the level of democracy between ten to twenty years after intervention. The
explanation they offer for this result is that democratic leaders care most about their own political survival and democratic nation-building does not serve this purpose. Frequently autocratic leaders, who do not have to take into consideration the needs and interests of their people, can undertake policies that benefit the intervener.

Another group of authors focus on factors that can facilitate or hinder the successful democratic FIRCs. The level of effort (resources and commitment) put forward by intervening states is considered to influence the level of success of democratization on the target countries. Dobbins (2003), making use of the nation-building literature, use this approach to compare cases of American interventions since world war II, taking as main indicators of effort the number of occupation troops per capita and the amount of economic aid. Another group of arguments attribute to certain conditions of the target countries the success or failure of the use of force to export democracy. The conditions most focused upon are: the level of wealth, the extent of ethnic, religious or social cleavages in the society, whether the state has any previous democratic experience. These variables are examined to determine how much do they affect the survival of imposed democracies (Enderline and Greig, 2008 is an important example).

Downes and Monten (2010) test those main findings of the FIRC literature, adjusting the research designs for possible selection bias of the target states and in some other points. To evaluate the level of democracy the authors use the Polity index. They came to the following conclusions:

1. on average, states that experience democratic FIRCs remain firmly rooted in authoritarian regimes; states that have their governments removed by democratic states gain no significant improvement in democracy as compared to similar states that do not experience intervention;

2. in terms of preconditions favorable to democracy, the authors found that the effect of democratic imposition are influenced by the levels of economic development and ethnic heterogeneity present in the target states; FIRCs led by democracies do better in ethnically homogeneous states, while the opposite is true in more heterogeneous countries; democratic FIRCs lead to better democratization outcomes in relatively wealthy countries and loose ground in relatively poor targets;
3. in the cases where the democratic interveners put forth some or an enormous effort to democratize the target states, these efforts were more likely to meet with success when the target was relatively wealthy and ethnically homogeneous.

Overall Downs and Monten (2010) conclude that “evidence form past experiences suggests that imposed regime change by democratic states is unlikely to be an effective means of spreading democracy” (p.44)

In face of the results for the Democratic FIRC, regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq is not likely to thrive. The case of Libya is still inconclusive.

Afghanistan is the least promising case. In fact, although showing homogeneity in religious terms – 99% of the population is Muslim, among which 80% are Sunnis and 20% are Shias –, the country is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita GDP of 750 dollars in 2001, the year of the American invasion. The ethnic fragmentation, moreover, is very high, including diverse groups: Pashtu (42%), Tajik (27%), Hazara (9%), Aimak (4%), and Turkmen (3%) Baloch (2%) and others (4%).

Iraq, in the year before the American invasion, 2002, presented a per capita GDP of 2,400 dollars, which put it in a higher rank than Afghanistan. However, both ethnicity and religion are sources of conflict. The Iraqi population is composed of Arabs (80%), Kurds (15%), Turks and Iranians (5%). If the country has a major ethnic group, which could indicate lesser conflicts, the Kurds are a belligerent minority which claims for a separate territory since the 1960’s. The great majority of the population is Muslim, divided into two distinct groups: the Sunnis (20%) and the Shias (60%). Those groups and the Kurds constitute the major Iraqi ever disputing groups.

Apparentely Libya enjoys better characteristics for regime change according to the FIRC literature. In fact, it has a per capita GDP much bigger than the other two countries: 14,500 dollars. It displays a high religious homogeneity: 97% of the population is Muslim, among which between 90% and 95% are Sunnis. The ethnic groups, moreover, used not to conflict to each other. However, after the beginning of the Arab Spring the various groups that compose the Libyan population – a majority of Arab-Turks and Arab- Berbers and minorities of Blacks, Tuaregs and Toubo – started clashing against
each other. The minorities confronted the Arab-Turks and also entered in disagreement with each other. It is still too soon to evaluate the chances of Libya for a successful regime change.

III. DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY IN BUSH’S AND OBAMA’S FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICIES DOCTRINES

This section will present the basic pillars of the foreign policy doctrine in the post-Cold War period and the Bush and Obama defense policies, there identifying the links between security and democracy. This will help to understand the military invasions in the Middle East and to demonstrate our argument.

THE PILLARS OF THE FOREIGN POLICIES DOCTRINES IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD

In the 1970’s, based on Hartz’s *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), Packenham (1973) worked on the hypotheses presented by the scholars of American exceptionalism, and showed that both the foreign policy doctrines presented by the American Cold War governments and the theories produced by social scientists on the field of political development shared the same core of values based on the American Liberal Tradition. Packenham analyzed the doctrines that regulated American foreign aid to Third World countries and the theories that guided these policies (Modernization theory) between 1947 and 1968.

Twenty years later, the fall of soviet communism and the end of the Cold War signaled a strong shift in the world order. After four decades of bipolar disputes, the American victory was interpreted as translating the superiority of the American Way of Life. The exceptionalist hypotheses seemed to be right. According to Farer (1996), one of the greatest advantages of this moment was the opportunity for America, in the absence of visible threats, to start basing its foreign policy doctrine on the liberal principles, without having to incur in the American Cold War ambiguities between values and interests.

Following Packenham (1973), Castro Santos (2010) believes it is possible to show that, in the post-Cold War world, both the democratization theory and American democracy promotion policies are also based on the same core values, referred to the American Liberal Tradition as well.
Using quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 415 speeches of the first three post-Cold War Presidents and their Secretaries of State, Castro Santos (2010) identifies the pillars of American foreign policy doctrines that justify the exporting of democracy even by the use of force – the most difficult means to be used in the name of democracy. Three principles and one American mission, so to speak, were recurrent in the speeches:

(1) The values and principles of the western liberal democracy are universal, that is, all peoples of the world wish to become democratic. Therefore, the promotion of democracy is for the good of mankind;
(2) Democracies do not fight each other. Therefore, exporting democracy means to promote regional and even global peace. Here democracy is linked to regional and global peace;
(3) The promotion of democracy makes the world safer and more prosperous for the United States. Here democracy is linked to the security and the economic interests of the United States.

**Mission:** The Americans think of themselves as having a mission to bring freedom and democracy to mankind.

In the Bush administration the third principle is crucial to justify invasions to Afghanistan and Iraq: it assumes that the US and the world for that matter will only be safe when those rogue states become democratic. This is because, in the long run, the weapon to fight terrorism is democracy, given that authoritarian states harbor terrorists and produce weapons of mass destruction. Bush and his aides think moreover that a democratic Iraq would help regime change in the Middle East and, by the second principle, the region would become more peaceful. Besides, American intervention does not have an evil nature. On the contrary, principle one assumes that, like all the peoples of the world, Iraqis and Afghans want to become democratic. Americans will therefore free them, and give them the democratic life they have deserved and desired for such a long time.

In the Obama administration the first principle is prominent, as it will become clearer along this work. In fact, he referred frequently to the universality of the democratic values, but differently form Bush he stated that it is not for the United States to impose
regime change: this is a task for the local peoples themselves, which moreover should build democracy on their own terms. He, however, made use in some occasions of the third principle, which links security to democracy, and values to interests.

THE BUSH DOCTRINE AND FOREIGN POLICY

When George W. Bush assumed the presidency of the United States in 2001 he, with his foreign policy team, decided that the liberal internationalist strategy which had prevailed in the previous government was no longer appropriate to represent the international aspirations of the American people. Marked by the promotion of an “Americanised” world order, Clinton’s grand strategy believed that a strong set of multilateral institutions, and not America’s military predominance, was the key to creating a friendlier world order characterized by the spread of democratic governments and open markets.

That was not, however, the way Bush thought about how the world worked. He criticized his predecessor for engaging in nation-building and humanitarian interventions overseas. Among his several campaign promises, he stated he would be more selective in relation to the use of force, and called for a less interventionist approach with regard to internal affairs of other countries. His National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, for example, said about the nation-building operation in the Balkans that “carrying out civil administration and police functions is simply going to degrade the American capability to do the things America has to do. We don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten”\(^4\). The defense of the new approach would also become very clear by the words of the President himself: “When it comes to foreign policy, that’ll be my guiding question: is it in our nation’s interests?” (Presidential Debate in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, October 11, 2000)

To summarize, Bush was skeptical of multilateralism and unrelenting toward potential adversaries. He and his advisors argued, for example, against negotiations with North Korea, for a more detached approach to Russia, and for treating China as a “strategic competitor” instead of a “strategic partner”\(^5\). They also made explicit their concern over any erosion of American sovereignty through potential membership to multilateral


agreements such as the International Criminal Court or the Kyoto Protocol. The administration adopted strategic adjustments that focused on supposedly “vital national interests”, towards a more realist foreign policy strategy.

There were certainly different understandings of the international system inside the government, and the press talked about divergences between the State Department and the Pentagon. The well known neoconservative movement was strongly represented in the administration, especially by Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, Douglas Feith, John Bolton, Elliot Abrams e Lewis Libby. But they were not able to influence the foreign policy doctrine in their favor in the first few months of government. Other presidential advisers, such as Collin Powell, Richard Hass and Condoleezza Rice were openly against idealistic campaigns in foreign policy issues. Above all, the President showed little interest to the radical and aggressive neoconservative political agenda.

Every debate and criticism ceased, however, on the day of the terrorist attacks to New York and Washington. From that point on, American foreign policy would change its world view. After a dramatic review of his grand strategy, Bush decided to adopt the neoconservative approach embracing a far-reaching and proactive foreign policy based on American military power. The American military interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), although important in themselves, are even more noteworthy as manifestations of this new strategy which became known as the Bush Doctrine.

This strategy represented a radical change in the President’s initial world view and, as synthesized on the 2002 National Security Strategy’s foreword, it proposed that America should “defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants…, preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers…, [and] extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent”.

Obviously influenced by September 11, Bush’s first innovation was to identify both terrorists and tyrants (and a connection between them) as the new threats. The excitement brought by victory on the Cold War had discouraged American leaders to confront threats posed by this new type of enemy, whose weapon of choice (terrorist

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attacks), where not exactly understood by a defense system prepared for the conventional war. Weapons of Mass Destruction were the last resort during the Cold War, while today, the NSS points out, “our enemies see weapons of mass destruction as weapons of choice”.

Since containment and deterrence would not work against this new threat, an element of preemption had to be added to the defense strategy:

Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first… We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries. Rogue states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means… As was demonstrated by the losses on September 11, 2001, mass civilian casualties is the specific objective of terrorists and these losses would be exponentially more severe if terrorists acquired and used weapons of mass destruction… To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively. (NSS, 2002)

The National Security Strategy also included a preference for multilateral action: “The United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community”. Of course, multilateralism, which eventually assumed the form of a “coalition of the willing”, was never a real prerequisite of the doctrine. Actually, the American government was determined to act unilaterally whenever necessary: “we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country”. To do that, defense spending increased dramatically for the first time since the 1980’s, reaching U$400 bi in 20037. Asserting American hegemony became necessary to put into work a foreign policy doctrine based on unilateral preemptive action.

At last, the Bush Doctrine pointed to the only definitive solution to the problem of removing the causes of terrorism and tyranny: democracy. The principles and values of liberal democracy, as described by Castro Santos (2010) for the post-Cold War foreign

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policies doctrines, were not seen as ideals, but as effective and pragmatic tools against such threats. The American Liberal Tradition (Hartz, 1955) once more prevailed, this time embodied in a most radical strategy: preemptive war. Only in a democratic environment the United States would be really safe:

The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. (…) Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now it is the urgent requirement of our nation’s security, and the calling of our time. So 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 our world. (Inaugural Speech, 2005)

This direct connection established by Bush between promoting democracy and assuring American national interests became indispensable to justify his foreign policy doctrine in general, and the Iraq war in particular. Exporting democracy to the Middle East was the single solution to every identifiable threat (terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, tyranny). This idea was repeatedly defended by the President in his speeches to the Congress and to the Nation. It started on September 11, 2001, soon after the president learns about the attacks, when he already interprets the phenomenon in liberal terms saying that “Freedom, itself, was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended” (Remarks at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, on the Terrorist Attacks), and continues through both of his terms: “The advance of freedom is the surest strategy to undermine the appeal of terror in the world. Where freedom takes hold, hatred gives way to hope” (Address to the Nation on Iraq From the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, May 1st, 2003); “Our security is assured by our perseverance and by our sure belief in the success of liberty” (Address to the Nation on the Capture of Saddam Hussein. December 14, 2003); “The only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror and replace hatred with hope is the force of human freedom” (State of the Union, 2005); “[T]he most realistic way to protect the American people is to provide a hopeful alternative to the hateful ideology of the enemy by advancing liberty across a troubled region” (Address to the Nation on the War on Terror in Iraq. January 10, 2007); “[A] free Iraq is critical to the security of the United States. A free Iraq will deny Al Qaida a safe haven,... will counter the destructive ambitions of Iran,... will marginalize extremists, unleash the talent of its people, and be an anchor of stability in the region” (Address to the Nation on the War on Terror in Iraq. October 13,
2007); “[F]or the security of America and the peace of the world, we are spreading the hope of freedom” (State of the Union, 2008).

THE OBAMA DEFENSE STRATEGY AND FOREIGN POLICY

If Bush focused his presidency after September 11 on ending tyranny and promoting democracy in the world, Obama assumed in 2009 with clear intentions to pull back from this freedom agenda. The objective was no longer to transform domestic societies by force and establish democratic governments in rogue states but to prevent al Qaeda or other extremist elements from regrouping in these countries and carrying out violent attacks against the United States or its allies. When announcing his new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in March 2009, for example, the president showed that America had “a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.” He confirmed this strategy when he announced his second strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in December 2009: “We must deny al Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government.”

Obama has played a very much interest-based foreign policy as compared to the value-based Bush Doctrine in other parts of the world as well. During his first years, security interests overshadowed human rights and democracy promotion. In fact, in major foreign policy speeches in his initial time in office, he adopted a distant approach to democracy. Thus, if in Prague, in April 2009, he declared that “freedom is a right for all people, no matter what side of a wall they live on, and no matter what they look like”, he, however, used to start his talks with apologies for the American democracy promotion strategies from the previous administration, like in Cairo, in June 2009: “I know there has been controversy about the promotion of democracy in recent years, and much of this controversy is connected to the war in Iraq.” He also acknowledged problems in the American democratic example, as done in Moscow, in July 2009: “By no means is America perfect.” The general tone was that democracy was a cherished value, but there was no special role for America to spread it by force, as he explicitly stated in Ghana, in July 2009: “Each nation gives life to democracy in its own way, and in line with its own traditions ... America will not seek to impose any system of government on any other nation.”
Perhaps because of the electoral necessity to distance himself from President Bush, Obama took office with a clear activist vision of his foreign policy. The idea was to restore the United States' image abroad, especially in the Muslim world; end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; open dialogues with Iran; “reset” relations with Russia as a step towards nuclear disarmament; convince the Chinese to cooperate on global issues; and make peace in the Middle East. His choices represented a move in favor of multilateralism as a strategy to achieve America’s national interests. The global order envisioned by Obama was certainly not one where American triumphalism and exceptionalism predominated as preferred by Bush. It was not one of American decline either. It was to be a liberal order, with the United States still in a leading position, but where burdens and responsibilities should be shared with other countries.

Obama has accumulated some notable successes: the significantly weakening of al Qaeda; the managing of the relations with China; the effectiveness in the rebuilding the United States’ international reputation; the resetting of the relationship with Russia and the ratifying of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START); the promotion of a UN Security-Council resolution imposing sanctions on Iran; the completion of free-trade agreements (notably with South Korea, Panama, Colombia and with the European Union, this one in its early stages of negotiation); and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. There have also been some notable letdowns, including little progress on creating peace in the Middle East, very little action on combating climate change, increasing frictions in U.S.-Pakistan relations, an Iran still focused on acquiring the means to produce nuclear weapons, a North Korea still developing its nuclear arsenal, and the lack of a more than rhetorical approach to the Syrian situation.

One could say that Obama came to power with a foreign policy strategy of “engagement” based on three pillars: a new relationship with the rising powers in Asia, particularly China (it should be a partner, not a competitor); a transformed relationship between the United States and the Muslim world, in which cooperation should replace conflict; and multilateral progress toward nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament.

Regarding the Muslim world, Obama always intended to continue to combat terrorism, but he did not embrace Bush's concept of a global war on terror nor his emphasis on promoting democracy as a strategy to combat terrorism. Instead, he took the emphasis away from the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and focused on attacking al Qaeda
operatives – mainly in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The administration's success in this area can be placed among its most important achievements, since Obama has ended the Iraq war, increased the focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, and seriously weakened al Qaeda (Bin Laden’s killing being a fact of major importance).

In Iraq and Afghanistan however, stability is still uncertain, and it is not yet clear if the president will be able to exit the wars without leaving behind a situation worse than the one that existed before the American intervention. The president did, however, try to adapt his earlier campaign promises to the realities he found on both wars. In Iraq, for example, he slowed down the withdrawal of U.S. troops, bringing them home by the end of 2011, ironically in accordance with the schedule first designed by Bush in 2008.

It was his disassociation of values and interests in American war strategies that favored a decision to devote more resources than his predecessor to both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and not to Iraq. But the very nature of the problems there and the divisions within the administration over how to handle them, have prevented greater successes. Divergent strategy proposals have confused the local populations over the American intentions about staying or leaving and about their mutual perceptions as friends or adversaries. This led to a situation of increased tensions and mistrust.

By December 2010, the Arab Spring became probably the biggest and most unexpected event Obama had to deal with. Suddenly, a wave of political upheavals around a region that had been relatively stable for decades, although authoritarian, forced the administration to rethink its foreign policy strategy and to develop a new one where the democratic component gained relevance. He, however, thought that the United States had limited ability to affect the Arab Spring outcomes:

“How this incredible transformation will end remains uncertain. But we have a huge stake in the outcome. And while it’s ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well” (State of the Union, 2012).

8 The US-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (official name: “Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq On the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq”) was an agreement between Iraq and the United States, signed by President George W. Bush in 2008. It established that U.S. combat forces would withdraw from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009, and all U.S. forces will be completely out of Iraq by December 31, 2011.
All in all it is fair to say that Obama is more committed to the first democratic principle described above (about the universality of democratic values), than to the third one (that which connects a democratic world to American interests), and that he definitely does not support the idea of promoting democracy by force, as it had been clearly stated in the National Security Strategy of 2010:

The United States supports those who seek to exercise universal rights around the world. We promote our values above all by living them at home. We continue to engage nations, institutions, and peoples in pursuit of these values abroad... In doing so, our goals are realistic, as we recognize that different cultures and traditions give life to these values in distinct ways...America will not impose any system of government on another country...More than any other action that we have taken, the power of America’s example has helped spread freedom and democracy abroad. (National Security Strategy, 2010, p.36)

The president has supported the demands for freedom and democracy across the Arab world and assisted in overthrowing unpopular dictators in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, without losing sight of the U.S. interests in stability in the Middle East. There have been some important setbacks however, like the failure to seize the opportunity to push for meaningful reforms in Bahrain, and the slowness to push for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s ousting. His actions certainly represent a new balance between American values and strategic interests in the region.

So, what is the role of democracy in Obama’s grand strategy as far as Middle East is concerned? When it comes to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, security took precedence over democracy: the objectives were to fight Al Qaeda, not terrorism in global terms and therefore the military actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan should be enforced; and to retreat from Iraq given that the democratic nation-building was a task for the Iraqi people, not for Americans. When the Arab Spring broke out, however, the importance of democracy grew significantly in Obama’s defense strategy, as he felt compelled to contribute to decrease the instability that grew enormously with the liberalizing upheavals in the region by supporting the rebel’s side.

III. MOTIVES AND JUSTIFICATIONS OF THE MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ AND LYBIA
In this section our task is to demonstrate that although other short-run motives and justifications for the invasions in the Middle East existed and even prevailed over democracy, the building of a democratic system of values and principles in the target countries was the normative element which completed the Bush foreign policy doctrine and especially his defense doctrine. As for Obama, democracy building was not an end in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, while his limited in time and multilateral intervention in Libya seemed to only indirectly aim democratic nation-building. Obama does embrace the democratic principles, but he does not support the idea of promoting them by force. In the Arab Spring context, he will act for humanitarian purposes and will pressure authoritarian leaders out of office.

MOTIVES AND JUSTIFICATIONS

The quantitative analysis of 431 speeches by Bush and his Secretaries of State and Defense counted 381 motives and justifications for the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were distributed in the following categories: terrorism, rogue states behavior, existence of WMD’s, humanitarian assistance, promotion of regional stability, unilateral enforcement of international enactments, democracy and security.

The motives and justifications were assembled in clusters, so to speak, so that they become more meaningful in analytical terms. In this way, we divided them in two broad clusters: the broad security cluster and the broad democracy cluster. This is because we found two basic wide-ranging justifications for Iraq and Afghanistan interventions.

The first cluster of motives and justifications – the security cluster - indicates that the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq had the purpose to fight terrorism in these countries because their autocratic regimes were supposed to harbor terrorists and specifically Al Qaeda, as well as produce and distribute weapons of mass destruction to them, as it is expected to happen in rogue states. This dreadful combination threatens the security of the United States. The elements of this cluster - terrorism, WMD and rogue states -,

9 From President Bush we analyzed all the speeches from the following categories: State of the Union, Inaugural Addresses, Addresses to the Congress, Major Addresses to the Nation and the Bush Doctrine main speeches. They were all taken from the American Presidency Project – University of California, Santa Barbara (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/). From Secretaries of State Powell and Rice we collected the speeches made at the UN, NATO and the U.S. Congress. Source: U.S. Department of State (www.state.gov). From Secretaries of Defense Rumsfeld and Gates we analyzed all their speeches as reproduced in the U.S. Department of Defense website (www.defense.gov).
appear together in the analyzed speeches or in different combinations two by two or one by one. It belongs as well to the broad security cluster combinations of the narrower security cluster, as just described, with each of the following motivations and justifications, one by one: humanitarian assistance, regional stability and international law enforcement. Finally, in what we named “blended clusters” these three last motivations may also appear combined with the narrower security cluster, together or in different combinations two by two.

The second cluster of motives and justifications – the democracy cluster – points to the liberal consideration that only democracy can definitely fight terrorism in the long run. This is because democracies by their inherent characteristics of transparency and accountability do not provide safe haven for terrorists nor distribute WMDs to them. This cluster then brings the democratic motivation alone or in combination with the security cluster. It can also combine with regional stability, humanitarian assistance and international law enforcement in different ways to form a broad democracy cluster just like described above for the broad security cluster.

More rarely, regional stability – which would be brought by the defeat of terrorists or by turning the Middle East democratic –, or humanitarian assistance – so much deserved by the Afghans and the Iraqis – were used alone by the Bush administration to justify the military invasions to Iraq and Afghanistan. The enforcement of international law to which Saddam Hussein never complied with, never appeared alone, but always combined with the security and the democracy clusters, especially with the former in the first Bush administration.
Table 1: Motives and Justifications for the Military Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Bush Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Broad Security Cluster</th>
<th>Broad Democracy Cluster</th>
<th>Motivation 3: Regional Stability</th>
<th>Motivation 4: Humanitarian Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A)**</td>
<td>(A) + Reg. Stab. (B)</td>
<td>(A) + Hum. Assist. (C)</td>
<td>(A) + Int. Law Enforc. (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy Cluster (F)**</td>
<td>(F) + Reg. Stab. (G)</td>
<td>(F) + Hum. Assist. (H)</td>
<td>(F) + Int. Law Enforc. (I)</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Bush's 1st term</td>
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<td>Bush's 2nd term</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Analysis of 381 motivations and justifications for the Afghanistan and the Iraq invasions in the Bush administration selected out of 431 speeches of President Bush and his Secretaries of State, Powell and Rice, and Defense, Rumsfeld and Gates, 2001-2008.

** The narrow “Security Cluster” includes motivations related to terrorism, WMDs, and rogue states appearing together in the analyzed speeches or in different combinations two by two or one by one. The narrow “Democratic Cluster” includes the democratic motivation alone or in combination with the security cluster.

*** The “Blended Clusters” (E) includes combinations of the motivations Regional Stability, Humanitarian Assistance, and International Law Enforcement with the narrower Security Cluster, together or in different combinations two by two. The “Blended Clusters” (J) includes combinations of these same three motivations (Regional Stability, Humanitarian Assistance, and International Law Enforcement) with the narrower Democracy Cluster in different ways to form a broad democracy cluster just like described above for the broad Security Cluster.

In the Bush government, from a total of 381 motives and justifications identified for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 431 speeches, 54.59% referred to the broad security cluster, while the broad democracy cluster reached 30.44% (see Table I). At first sight, therefore, it appears that security took unquestionable precedence over democracy in Bush’s foreign and defense policies. The separate exam of his first and second terms, however, better qualifies this result.

The first Bush administration faced the Afghanistan invasion, the preparation for the invasion of Iraq, the invasion of Iraq itself and the occupation of both countries. From a
total of 292 motives and justifications identified for such actions in 236 speeches, 44% referred to different combinations of terrorism, rogue states and WMD’s (the security cluster), while only 17% related these elements to democracy as their antidote (the democracy cluster).

When one considers the broad clusters, i.e. when concerns about regional stability, humanitarian assistance or Iraq’s non-enforcement of international law, the difference between the proportions of justifications related to security and democracy enlarges much more: 71% for the broad security cluster and 24% for the broad democracy cluster. This result is due to the large share of justifications for Iraq invasion based on the non-compliance of Saddam Hussein with international law. In fact, as it will be seen below, especially Colin Powell delivered a great number of speeches indicating how dangerous Saddam Hussein was to the United States and the international community by not complying with innumerable UN Resolutions (cf. Table I and Figure I).

* From the 236 speeches relative to Bush’s first term, we found 292 justifications.
Data: Content analysis of speeches from President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 2001-2004.

When Bush inaugurated his second period in office, in 2005, the existence of WMD’s in Iraq had been proved misleading for a little more than one year. We analyzed 195 speeches of Bush and his Secretaries of State and Defense, there identifying 79 references to justifications and motives to invade Afghanistan and Iraq. In this period, the proportion of the democracy cluster among the whole set of motives and justifications identified in the analysis almost doubled, going from 17% in the first Bush
term to 32% in his second administration. The security cluster went down: from 44% to 39%.

The decrease of the motivations to invade the two rogue states related to security was significant when we examined the broad security cluster: it went down from a proportion of 71% in the first Bush term to 52% in the second one. Again the explanation is in the large share of justifications to invade Iraq based on international law enforcement to make Saddam accountable to the world community. The share of the motivations in the broad democracy cluster went in the opposite direction: it raised significantly, going up from 24% in the first Bush term to 57% in his second term.

*From the 195 speeches relative to Bush’s first term, we found 79 justifications.

All in all, no matter if we consider the broad or the narrower clusters, the tendency is clear: in the second Bush administration motivations and justifications to invade Afghanistan and Iraq related to security went down, while those that connected democracy to the other motives and justifications went up. These results unequivocally signal the grown importance of democracy as the best antidote to the ideology of hatred as prescribed in the Bush Doctrine and relentless stated by Condoleezza Rice.

Finally, it is worth pointing that there is a great difference in absolute numbers of motives and justifications for the use of force in the two rogue states from one period of the Bush government to the other. In fact, either considering the broad or the narrower clusters, linked to democracy or security, the total number of motives and justifications
for the invasions went down 73%, from 292 in the first term to 79 in the second one. This was expected, since the first period was characterized by the beginning of two wars and the need to convince the American people that the government was right and was acting their interests and benefit.

As indicated above, the analysis of Obama administration is only partial given that the speeches of the Secretaries of State and Defense could not be examined due to time constraints. We worked only with speeches of President Obama\textsuperscript{10}, in the total of 22 speeches. From these 36 motives and justifications for military actions were identified. The justifications of the broad security cluster (11) were almost twice as much as those of the broad democracy cluster (5) when the President referred to the Afghanistan and Iraq situations. But when it comes to Libya, the references to democracy (8) and to security (6) do not differ much. The main difference between Obama’s justifications toward the actions in Afghanistan and Iraq by one hand, and the use of force in Libya, by the other, is in the drawing on humanitarian assistance in his speeches. In fact, while regarding Afghanistan and Iraq we could identify only two references to humanitarian aid, concerning the multilateral military action in Libya, Obama made use of this motive to take military action 9 times (cf Table II).

These results, although inconclusive, points to the significant difference between Bush’s and Obama’s defense strategies. In fact, as seen above, Obama dropped the war on terror, broadly speaking, focusing specifically in the destruction of Al Qaeda. That is why he decided to reinforce the presence of American troops in Afghanistan and withdraw from Iraq, where he saw no explicitly links with the terrorist organization that attacked the United States. He does not link either democracy with security. That is why he agreed to participate in the invasion of Libya on a limited basis. Obama hoped that democracy would follow, but he had no intention to participate in democratic nation-building in this country, which task he thought to be the Libyans’.

Even taking into consideration the absence of the speeches of the Secretaries of State and Defense in the analysis, it is striking the difference in the number of speeches classified in the same categories between Bush (236) administration and Obama (22).

\textsuperscript{10}From Barack Obama we analysed all the speeches from the following categories: State of the Union, Inaugural Addresses, Addresses to Congress, Major Addresses to the Nation and Addresses to United Nations General Assembly. They were all taken from the American Presidency Project – University of California, Santa Barbara (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/).
Probably this reflects, at least in a great part, the most dramatic situation in external and defense affairs faced by Bush with the 9/11 episode.

Table 2: Motives and Justifications for the Military Interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya during the Obama Administration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Afghanistan and Iraq</th>
<th>Libya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Security Cluster (A)</strong></td>
<td>(A) + Reg. Stab. (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan and Iraq</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Analysis of 18 motivations and justifications for the Afghanistan and the Iraq invasions and of 18 motivations and justifications for the Libyan intervention in the Obama administration selected out of 22 speeches of President Obama, 2009-2013.

** The narrow “Security Cluster” includes motivations related to terrorism, WMDs, and rogue states appearing together in the analyzed speeches or in different combinations two by two or one by one. The narrow “Democratic Cluster” includes the democratic motivation alone or in combination with the security cluster.

*** The “Blended Clusters” (E) includes combinations of the motivations Regional Stability, Humanitarian Assistance, and International Law Enforcement with the narrower Security Cluster, together or in different combinations two by two. The “Blended Clusters” (J) includes combinations of these same three motivations (Regional Stability, Humanitarian Assistance, and International Law Enforcement) with the narrower Democracy Cluster in different ways to form a broad democracy cluster just like described above for the broad Security Cluster.

It follows a qualitative analysis of the motives and justifications of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, through the examination of Bush’s speeches and those of his Secretaries of State, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice and his Secretaries of Defense, Ronald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates. Although as one noted in the quantitative analysis, those speeches can indicate justifications to the use of force based mainly on security terms or in motives that linked security to democracy, in the analysis below these clusters will not be treated separately.

President G.W. Bush coherently repeated over and over again in his speeches after September 11 that the priority of his administration was to fight terrorism; that dictatorships provided safe havens for terrorists and produced weapons of mass destruction; and that a democratic Afghanistan and Iraq would make the world and the United States safer. He did so on September 20, 2001 in his first speech to Congress...
after the terrorist attacks and continued to do it along his two terms in office until the very last year of 2008. Some excerpts follow:

On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against Al Qaida terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime. (President Bush, Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001)

The triumph of democracy and tolerance in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and beyond would be a grave setback for international terrorism. The terrorists thrive on the support of tyrants and the resentments of oppressed peoples. When tyrants fall and resentment gives way to hope, men and women in every culture reject the ideologies of terror and turn to the pursuits of peace. Everywhere that freedom takes hold, terror will retreat. (President Bush, Address to the Nation, September 7, 2003)

To complete the mission, we will prevent Al Qaida and other foreign terrorists from turning Iraq into what Afghanistan was under the Taliban, a safe haven from which they could launch attacks on America and our friends. And the best way to complete the mission is to help Iraqis build a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself. (President Bush, Address to the Nation, June 28, 2005)

The mission in Iraq has been difficult and trying for our nation. But it is in the vital interest of the United States that we succeed. A free Iraq will deny al Qaeda a safe haven. A free Iraq will show millions across the Middle East that a future of liberty is possible. A free Iraq will be a friend of America, a partner in fighting terror, and a source of stability in a dangerous part of the world. (President Bush, State of the Union, January 28, 2008)

Those links between terrorism and dictatorship are a crucial point of the Bush Doctrine, which prescribes, as a consequence, the building of democracy as the essential tool to win the war on terror.

If support for the military operations in Afghanistan were tacitly a consensus in the international community, this was not the case for Iraq. A strategy had to be prepared, and soon after the invasion of Afghanistan the focus of the Bush administration turned to Iraq.

“The threat comes from Iraq”, Bush stated in his Address to the Nation on Iraq in October 7, 2002. Along the year of 2002 and the beginning of 2003 Bush dedicated himself to sort of preparing the American people for the next invasion in another
dangerous rogue state. He would deliver several Addresses to the Nation on Iraq, where he assured that Saddam Hussein not only gave support and shelter to terrorists but also possessed and produced weapons of mass destruction. He insisted that Saddam’s regime had violated all of its obligations before the international community since the Gulf War, had defied United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding full disarmament, had threatened U.N. nuclear inspectors, and had continued to threaten the world and the United States (cf. The Address to the Nation on Iraq in October 7, 2002; February 1, 2003; March 17, 2003; May 1, 2003). The State of the Union speeches from 2002 and 2003 also denounced the danger represented by Iraq to America.

It followed a period of great American pressure on the United Nations and its Security Council to react against the “despicable and dangerous” acts of Saddam Hussein. Secretary Powell followed closely the UN Resolutions on the matter, demanding a preemptive action. The Bush administration, however, clearly indicated that it would act any way:

Iraq has now placed itself in danger of the serious consequences called for in UN Resolution 1441. And this body places itself in danger of irrelevance if it allows Iraq to continue to defy its will without responding effectively and immediately. (...) My colleagues, we have an obligation to our citizens. We have an obligation to this body to see that our resolutions are complied with. We wrote 1441 not in order to go to war. We wrote 1441 to try to preserve the peace. We wrote 1441 to give Iraq one last chance. Iraq is not, so far, taking that one last chance. (Colin Powell, New York City, February 5, 2003)

One can go back many years to the end of the Gulf War; and when that war ended resolutions were passed that said Iraq should disarm itself of its weapons of mass destruction, and you well know the history of the last 12 years of continued Iraqi defiance of their obligations under their resolutions, a total of some 16 resolutions; and finally 1441 was passed by the United Nations where a whole international community came together. (...) some of the members of the Security Council who signed on at that time didn't understand that the United States of America was deadly serious. We were going to disarm Saddam Hussein, peacefully or, if not peacefully, through the use of force of arms. (Colin Powell, Testimony before the House Budget Committee, February 13, 2003)

(...) if the United States feels strongly that Iraq still has weapons of mass destruction and trying to develop new ones, the United States reserves the right and believes there is sufficient authority within international law, based on many acts of noncompliance, many material breaches in the past and continuing material breaches into the present, that would give us a basis for undertaking whatever might be required
After the Iraqi invasion Powell still referred to the American unilateral action: “We took the case to the international community, to the United Nations, reminded the world of all the resolutions this individual had violated -- Saddam Hussein. And it was time to act. Act we did. He is gone and the people of Iraq are free”. (Colin Powell, Washington DC, February 3, 2004). He added in the same speech: “There should be no doubt in the mind of the American people or anyone else in the world that we have done the right thing, and history will certainly be the test of that”.

As seen above, unilateral action, if necessary, and preemptive war were crucial elements of the Bush Doctrine. They were used promptly and unambiguously when it came to the invasion of Iraq. In this moment the existence of weapons of mass destruction and the fear that they could end in terrorists’ hands were justifications for military actions very much enforced. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld did it the most, especially along the preparation of the invasion:

But I think we'll know when we have been successful in for the most part dealing with the most serious global network threats and the countries that are harboring those. The real -- the real concern at the present time is the nexus between terrorist networks and terrorist states that have weapons of mass destruction. And let there be no doubt, there is that nexus, and it must force people all across this globe to realize that what we're dealing with here is something that is totally different than existed in previous periods, and it poses risks of not thousands of lives, but hundreds of thousands of lives, when one thinks of the power and lethality of those weapons..(Secretary Rumsfeld speaks on “21st Century Transformation” of U.S. Armed Forces, January 31, 2002)

There are a handful of terrorist nations in the world that have very close connections with terrorist networks and those nations have weapons of mass destruction and they are developing weapons of mass destruction. And they are trading among themselves with those technologies. That means, they're testing them and we see them testing them. And one doesn't like to see that -- you like to turn your head and say well that is not really happening, or maybe it is not happening, but the reality is that it is happening. (Secretary Rumsfeld, Meeting with Troops, April 26, 2002)

To the extent that they [rogue states] might transfer WMD to terrorist groups they could conceal their responsibility for attacks on our people. There are a number of terrorist states pursuing weapons of mass destruction -- Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, just to name a few -- but no terrorist state poses a greater or more immediate threat to the security of our people than the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. (Testimony of
Some have argued that Iraq is unlikely to use weapons of mass destruction against us because, unlike terrorist networks, Saddam Hussein has a return address; that is to say he's probably deterrable, is the argument. Well, Mr. Chairman, there's no reason for confidence that if Iraq launched a WMD attack on the U.S. that it would necessarily have an obvious return of address. There are ways Iraq can easily conceal responsibility for a WMD attack. For example, they could give biological weapons to terrorist networks to attack the United States from within and then deny any knowledge. Suicide bombers are not deterrable. (Testimony of U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld before the House Armed Services Committee regarding Iraq, September 18, 2002)

When it became clear that the WMD’s did not exist, Bush, Powell and Rumsfeld came forward insisting that given the “solid intelligence base” of the information upon which they rested their decisions, Saddam’s poor records and the dictator refusal to open the country to international inspection, the invasion of Iraq was right:

From this office, nearly 3 years ago, I announced the start of military operations in Iraq. Our coalition confronted a regime that defied United Nations Security Council resolutions, violated a ceasefire agreement, sponsored terrorism, and possessed, we believed, weapons of mass destruction. After the swift fall of Baghdad, we found mass graves filled by a dictator. We found some capacity to restart programs to produce weapons of mass destruction, but we did not find those weapons. It is true that Saddam Hussein had a history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction (President George W. Bush, Address to the Nation on Iraq and the War on Terror, December 18, 2005)

And what did we know then? And what did we present? We said that this was a regime led by a dictator who had every intention of keeping his weapons of mass destruction programs going, and anyone who thinks he didn't is just dead wrong. And there is no evidence to suggest that was an incorrect judgment. He had used them in the past and it was clear if given the opportunity he would use them in the future if it served his purpose. We also knew that he had the capability. (Secretary Colin Powell, New York, February 6, 2004)

There was never any doubt in anyone's mind, and no intelligence agency past, present or future will ever demonstrate that Saddam Hussein gave up the intent to have such weapons. (Secretary Colin Powell, Testimony before the House International Relations Committee, February 11, 2004)

The debate wasn't about whether or not he had weapons of mass destruction. The debate in the U.N. wasn't about whether or not the declaration was fraudulent. The debate up there was how much longer did one think that inspections should be allowed to continue the way we were going. And finally, after 17 or 18 resolutions, a decision was made
When Condoleezza Rice became the Secretary of State (January 2005) and Robert Gates became the Secretary of Defense (December 2006) in the second term of the Bush administration, weapons of mass destruction were no longer the American concern in Iraq, nor were they impelled to defend the preemptive war strategy. They were focused on winning the war on terror and this meant not only a definitive victory in the battlefield but also and above all the building of democracy in the rogue state. Gates and especially Rice joined President Bush to reinforce the importance of democracy as the crucial weapon to fight terrorism. It follows some examples:

The President spoke of the significant progress we have made confronting the enemy abroad, removing many of al-Qaida’s top commanders, cutting off terrorist finances, and putting pressure on states that sponsor or harbor terrorists or seek to proliferate weapons of mass destruction. But in the long term, as President Bush said, "The only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror, and replace hatred with hope, is the force of human freedom." (Secretary C. Rice, President’s FY 2006 International Affairs Budget Request, February 16, 2005)

I want to just note that the President's budget, the '07 budget, is in support of a foreign policy that is devoted to the spread of liberty and democracy as the best antidote to the ideologies of hatred that feed the kind of terrorism that we have experienced and that many others around the world have experienced as well. (…) Democratic processes must be supported. (…) Therefore you will see in this budget request continuing support for the new democracies of Iraq and Afghanistan. (Secretary C. Rice, International Affairs Budget Request for FY 2007, February 16, 2007).

We will continue the discussions about the NATO role in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has been so effective and so helpful to helping those young democracies progress. (…) But of course we know that it is not enough to have a short-term solution to terrorism, that is, defeating the terrorists who on a daily basis plot and plan to destroy innocent life, but also to deal with the creation -- with the circumstances that created those terrorists. And we believe that the ideology of hatred which they espouse can only be met by advancing liberty and democracy. That is the goal that we have in the support for the young democracies of Iraq and Afghanistan (…) (Secretary C. Rice, Remarks with Secretary of NATO before their meeting, March 20, 2006).

In the campaign against terrorist networks and other extremists, we know that direct military force will continue to have a role. But over the long term, we cannot kill or capture our way to victory. What the Pentagon calls “kinetic” operations should be subordinate to measures to promote participation in government, economic programs to spur
development, and efforts to address the grievances that often lie at the heart of insurgencies and among the discontented from which the terrorists recruit. It will take the patient accumulation of quiet successes over time to discredit and defeat extremist movements and their ideology. (Secretary Robert Gates, U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, July 15, 2008)

These were the motives presented to legitimate the use of force. Naturally, Bush’s decisions to go for war in Afghanistan and Iraq would have been noteworthy in themselves, even if they were isolated events. This was not the case however, since the military interventions were explicitly justified in terms of a new foreign policy doctrine based on the principles of American nationalism and committed to freedom and democracy. When Bush identified democracy promotion as the only definite solution to the menace posed by rogue states, terrorism and WMD’s, he intertwined his foreign and defense policy and showed how essential was the role of democracy to his doctrine.

During the Obama administration, the focus of the American Middle East policy was much more restrict: combating al Qaeda. And for the president, keeping American troops in Iraq was not a part of this strategy:

A war to disarm a state became a fight against an insurgency. Terrorism and sectarian warfare threatened to tear Iraq apart. Thousands of Americans gave their lives; tens of thousands have been wounded. Our relations abroad were strained. Our unity at home was tested. (Address to the Nation on the End of Combat Operations in Iraq, August 31, 2010)

The troops in Afghanistan, however, were increased. The perception was that the region was still an unstable place of growing extremisms that represented graver threats to America:

So, no, I do not make this decision lightly. I make this decision because I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by Al Qaida. It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak. This is no idle danger, no hypothetical threat. In the last few months alone, we have apprehended extremists within our borders who were sent here from the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan to commit new acts of terror. And this danger will only grow if the region slides backwards and Al Qaida can operate with impunity. We must keep the pressure on Al Qaida, and to do that, we must increase the stability and capacity of our partners in the region. (Address to the Nation at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York December 1, 2009)
It becomes clear that President Obama had given democracy a much less important role in foreign policy than his predecessor. That changes with the developments of the Arab Spring, when he is forced to reintegrate a democratic component to his policy response. Still hesitant to start yet another intervention before finishing the other wars, Obama justifies the action in Libya mostly in humanitarian terms:

It’s true that America cannot use our military wherever repression occurs. And given the costs and risks of intervention, we must always measure our interests against the need for action. But that cannot be an argument for never acting on behalf of what’s right. In this particular country, Libya, at this particular moment, we were faced with the prospect of violence on a horrific scale. We had a unique ability to stop that violence: an international mandate for action, a broad coalition prepared to join us, the support of Arab countries, and a plea for help from the Libyan people themselves. We also had the ability to stop Qadhafi’s forces in their tracks without putting American troops on the ground. (Address to the Nation on the Situation in Libya, March 28, 2011)

Confronted by this brutal repression and a looming humanitarian crisis, I ordered warships into the Mediterranean. European allies declared their willingness to commit resources to stop the killing. The Libyan opposition and the Arab League appealed to the world to save lives in Libya. And so at my direction, America led an effort with our allies at the United Nations Security Council to pass a historic resolution that authorized a no-fly zone to stop the regime’s attacks from the air and further authorized all necessary measures to protect the Libyan people. (Address to the Nation on the Situation in Libya, March 28, 2011)

Obama would not start a nation building campaign in Libya; for him, the transition from the old regime was a task for the Libyans themselves. But he did hope for a democratic outcome:

Tomorrow Secretary Clinton will go to London, where she will meet with the Libyan opposition and consult with more than 30 nations. These discussions will focus on what kind of political effort is necessary to pressure Qadhafi, while also supporting a transition to the future that the Libyan people deserve, because while our military mission is narrowly focused on saving lives, we continue to pursue the broader goal of a Libya that belongs not to a dictator, but to its people. (Address to the Nation on the Situation in Libya, March 28, 2011)

The analysis of the motives and justifications to use force in the Middle East by the two Presidents, either in quantitative or in qualitative terms, shows the clear difference between their foreign and defense policies, highlighting the links between security and democracy.

IV. BRIEF TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS
This work showed the Bush’s and Obama’s clearly divergent strategies regarding the contemporary military interventions in the Middle East, stressing the different links between security and democracy in their respective foreign and defense policies, pointing to the different emphasis the two Presidents put in the principles of the foreign policies doctrines in the post-cold war period here identified and finally clarifying the differing motives and justifications for the use of force by the two administrations.

Which strategy is more likely to succeed? Bush’s or Obama’s? According to the FIRC literature neither strategy is good for the very reason that democratic foreign-imposed regimes only in a very few cases are successful. The cases of success are those in which the target countries have a relatively high level of economic development and low ethnic-religious fractioning. What makes the difference, therefore, are the internal variables, whichever are the defense and foreign strategies of the intervener countries.

According to these FIRC findings, Iraq and Afghanistan do not qualify for successful cases of regime change, although the former has better chances than the latter. In fact, according to the Polity index, which varies from -10 to 10, Iraq changed from an autocracy (-9) to an anocracy (3), still very far from a democracy. Afghanistan, however, did not move in the Polity scale, showing today the same index as in 2001 (-7), keeping the classification of an autocracy (-7). As for Libya, also classified as an autocracy in 2010, the year before the military intervention, is still soon to come to a definitive conclusion. It shows, however, the best characteristics pointed by the FIRC literature for a successful regime change: relatively high level of development, high religious homogeneity but conflicting ethnic groups beginning with the Arab Spring.