

***BEHIND THE WAR CURTAINS: A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN
FOREIGN POLICY IN THE IRAQ CONFLICT -THE GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES OF
DEROGATORY DECISIONS***

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Abstract : In the realm of decision-making policies, America's challenging hegemony of leadership has reached, with the Iraq war and its pre-conflict situation, a peak that no longer granted the country its alleged full supremacy. This resolution is grounded in support of the transatlantic relations and, more exactly, on the debate-generated sphere of dispute that resulted from former President Bush's foreign policy preference. It is in vain to assert that with the dawn of the Iraq war, the United States of America will have reached a consensus in relation to the giants of political governing, just as it is pointless to evaluate the present situation as the finite product of long-term political planning.

In order to perceive the reasons for nowadays stagnant and discouraging military actions, it is salient to interpret the European, American and Iraqi role-playing distributions in the arena of global politics. For this reason, the present paper aims at discussing the prerogatives of American foreign policy within the field of the Iraqi implications and its impact on the transatlantic relations, as well as Bush's conundrum in accounting for his leadership programs towards the American representation. Also, it debates the hidden implications that served as decisive factors for the presidential imposed politics, while, at the same time, it tries to explain why the American people were deluded into supporting their country's attack strategy.

Keywords: *transatlantic relations, foreign policy, Iraq war, decisive leadership, multilateralism*

Unleashed intentions: Bush's tactics towards a selfish foreign policy leadership

The premises for what has come to be nowadays considered world's "most disputed war"¹- the Iraq war- remain, despite the intensive lobbying promoted in favour of peace adoption, somehow affairs of private knowledge. Obviously, the roots of the American-Iraqi conflict stem back to the pre-Bush administration, becoming more obtrusive and nuanced with the September 11 terrorist attacks. It is obvious that with the infamous attacks on New York's World Trade Centre the world has witnessed the eve of a more coercive politics towards whatever appears as threatening. Naturally, this can be regarded as an instrument of the American over-protectorate, but it may very well hint at unveiling a revengeful tactics of the world's leader political enterprise.

To place Bush's decisional choices regarding the initiation of war against the Middle East Al Qaeda terrorists on the basis of neoconservative ideology is, even to Fukuyama²'s approach, far fetched. The president's attempt to overcome any possible chain-threats on the American people was conceived as an immediate cluster of policies which, apparently, served as a protective shell. However, what Bush and his administration failed to understand was that, by embracing the utmost politics of isolationism and hastened decisions, America will face the disaster of disbelief and will fail to promote its asserted moral values. By doing so, they neglected that the world was not entirely made up of American ideology, but rather, that it was constructed by "means of mutual commitment and clutching together"³.

¹ **Kupchan, Charles A.**, *The End of the American Era: US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century*, New York ,Knopf Publishing House, 2002, p. 351

² Advocate of the Bush administration up until the Iraq war, Fukuyama argues that the shift of policy making towards a warring leadership is derogatory. By blaming the presidential faulty decisions, Fukuyama asserts that contemporary American foreign policy needs to be rescued from the fall into stereotypical hatred and in order to do so; one must firstly act promptly in view of filling the created gaps.

³ **Roberts, Alasdair**, "The War We Deserve" in *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2007

This tactics of “decisive leadership, which follows through in policies regardless of opposition”⁴ served as a primary instrument in the wrecking of transatlantic relationships. How was Bush’s doctrine a means of “decisive leadership”? one may ask. The answer stays in the diplomacy standards with the rest of the world that the President held after the 9/11 attack and in the decisions he took so as to impede any potential threats. Naturally, it was no time for socializing or continuing to promote an unaffected attitude in respect to the Middle East, as the American people required some form of feed-back that their country was put under protection. And so it was. But at what cost?

The immediate European reaction to the terrorist attack was as expected: a politics of sympathetic actions sustaining the country’s moral. It took several speeches and a newly-born politics of revenge to shatter the European school of thought in two separate camps. With Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Condoleezza Rice and Collin Powell as key figures of the American administration engaged in the presumptive warfare programme, Europe was somehow caught on the wrong foot regarding their ally status. Obviously, with Bush’s statement that “success in Iraq could begin a new stage for Middle Eastern peace, and set in motion progress toward a truly democratic Palestinian state. The passing of Saddam Hussein’s regime will deprive terrorist networks of a wealthy patron that pays for terrorist training, and offers rewards to families of suicide bombers. And other regimes will be given a clear warning that support for terror will not be tolerated”⁵ the European states began to diminish their willingness to support the American state in view of the fact that the new foreign policy was clearly a war initiative. This led to the separation of European support⁶ into that of promoters (Great Britain, Spain, Poland and Italy) and into that of opposing forces (France⁷, Germany and Russia).

Needless to say, this separation was not in the least in conformity with what the European Union aimed at- unity and communion- , whereas America’s position augmented and became more and more threatening for third-parties such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Hidden behind this “if you build it, they will come doctrine”⁸ that Bush used as “campaign logo” stood a general understanding that the American presidency was not willing to take into account the allies’ opinions if they didn’t fit into their action plan. It was also the case with UN and NATO, both failing to reach a consensus on what to do about Iraq, to whom Bush paid little attention, even if, his allies (Tony Blair, for instance) continuously argued in favor of gaining the UN approval. In fact, this entire semantics of war scared peaceful European promoters, especially since they interpreted the American offensive also as a means of politics of expansion-similar to the “divide and conquer” policy.

Of course, President Bush’s statements at key moments before and during the war increased the general state of panic in the world: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. . . . [This] country will define our times, not be defined by them.”⁹ But there was more to the “old-European”¹⁰ backing away than the simple threatening American discourse conveyed as a means of gaining allies. In fact, what France and Germany understood beforehand was that the American tactics of implementing a warrior foreign policy in the Middle East would only reach a dissent rather than a consensus with the Muslims. Particularly, where Bush saw a nearing threat regarding Hussein’s presumed holding of weapons of mass destruction (though, according to the UN report

⁴ **Gordon, Philip H. and Shapiro, Jeremy**, *Allies at War: America, Europe and the Crisis over Iraq*, McGraw Hill Companies: 2004, p. 71

⁵ **Gordon**, *op. cit.*, p. 51

⁶ This separation was amplified by the Vilnius 10 and the Letter of Eight, as public statements in support of the American enterprise, of which France, Russia and Germany weren’t even informed.

⁷ At the beginning, however, France presented itself as a liable supporter of Iraq intervention, as it could economically benefit from the resourceful retributions. With the growing pathos for what appeared to be a serious war, the French diplomats clearly stated their opposition to the American way of handling the situation and insisted on the UN evaluations of WMD presence as a neutral arbiter.

⁸ **Gordon**, *op. cit.*, p. 125

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 179

¹⁰ With the Letter of Eight and Vilnius 10, Cheney and Bush referred to Europe as the Old part-France, Germany and Russia, whereas the promoters of USA were entitled the New-Europe.

there was no evidence to support such a belief), the Europeans managed to pierce through the core of the problem. Their objection was that if US continued the warring strategy and initiated conflict in the Middle East, they would only facilitate the “recruitment tool for Al-Qaeda and fuel extremism, while any cooperation between Ba’athists and Al-Qaeda was implausible”¹¹.

The deterioration of transatlantic relations was also the outcome of distinct ideological approaches towards foreign policy with regard to world reference. This way, while Javier Solana argued that “A common thread is that we Europeans are instinctive multilaterals and want the US to be more committed to multilateral solutions”, Condoleezza Rice’s response was that “Multilateral agreements and institutions should not be ends in themselves.”¹² The emphasis is, thus, on the fact that US foreign policy is somehow individualistic and less inclined towards multilateralism, whereas Europeans are open in respect to reaching compromises and covering a larger sphere of interest. It was hard, however, to avoid the collateral views that appeared on the basis on this transatlantic rupture, since Americans largely perceived the European politics of neutralism as anti-American. Naturally, the sort of anti-Americanism they accused Europe of practicing was a far softened version of the Muslim approach, but it remained as a black-hole in American-European relations.

Eventually, there is no conclusion to the disputed situation created by President Bush’s hastened decision making policy, as the remnants of the contradictory debates over Iraq have not been cauterized. In fact, what Old-Europe brought in its defense was that their foreign policy towards America was in fact biased regarding Bush and not the entire country, being rather “anti-Bush than anti-American”¹³. The question that arises is whether there was still any possibility to save the transatlantic alliance and promote the values of peaceful foreign policies. The only reasonable answer that seemed to solve this mystery is that Americans should have corrected their individualistic approach in relating to others and assume the risk that, being such a super-power, United States must act only after a thorough evaluation of the consequences they might bear on the rest of the world.

Understanding the implications of the “Axis of Evil”¹⁴- Extreme Determinism in Fighting a War for the Pursuit of Interest

With an already diminishing power in the world supremacy, the United States of America gradually faced the danger of lack of trustworthiness at the level of national sustaining actions. Obviously, when the Iraq war became rather a prolonged version of revenge, Americans began digging behind the façade of the postulated war reasons and pertained that they have been tricked into believing lies. Of course, it was a war on terror, which granted legitimacy to at least the scope of the war, but in fact, how many of the conflict objectives have been solved? Another pillar of public warfare maintenance was Bush’s stated intention to restore order in the Iraq-Iran conflicts, as people were blinded by the false-charity action that veiled the purpose of the Iraq war. This “idealistic Wilsonian crusade to reshape the Middle East in the American image”¹⁵ failed both in factual enterprise and in moral interpretation.

There are many arguments to show the biased implications that served in Bush’s decision making process regarding the Iraq war, some being utter analysis of pre-war situation. This way, it was said that “Bush started the war against Iraq in order to detach attention from the critical situation in domestic affairs and redirect his forces to a factual action”¹⁶ or that “the Bush administration knew that the peak oil crisis

¹¹ **Peterson, John and Pollack, Mark**, *Europe, America, Bush :Transatlantic Relationships in the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge 2003, p. 83

¹² Quoted in **Wiessala, Georg**, *The European Union-the Annual Review 2001-2002* in *Journal of Common Market Studies*

¹³ **Fukuyama, Francis**, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy*, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 162

¹⁴ “Axis of evil” refers to the nomination Bush made in respect to Iraq.

¹⁵ **Fukuyama**, *op.cit.*, p. 213

¹⁶ **Pelletiere, Stephen**, *Iraq and the International Oil System: Why America went to War in the Gulf*, Maisonneuve Press, Paris, second edition, 2004, p. 27

probably posed strategic dangers far beyond those publicly acknowledged. The dollar's role as the world's reserve currency was also tied with oil. So they had to act in consequence."¹⁷ Indeed, the idea of a war initiated for the pursuit of interest (oil, in this case) appeared to be a vicious circle from which America couldn't get out. There is no doubt that behind the ideology that inflicted the idea of warfare stood matters of political and economic liabilities. However, the way in which Bush administration abused of such means is translated directly in the disastrous consequences hanging in Middle East air.

It is interesting to note how Iraq remained in fact a third-party witness at this war initiative, since the main actors were America and their European allies, engaging in long debates related to strategies and tactics. And it is perhaps even more interesting to see how the American people remained significantly detached from the war court-yard, as their support for the domestic affairs remained practically inexistent. "In Bush's war, there was no role for private citizens. It was not to leave a pampered public undisturbed, however, but to enhance the unilateral power of the presidency. A participatory war on terror might expose the president's national security policy to the inconvenience of democratic responsiveness."¹⁸ Of course Bush took the risk of being the scape-goat of warfare policies, but, on the other hand, he was fully aware that convincing the people that taking control of the situation without people's implications was in his advantage. And because Americans are desperate for strategies instead of neutral compromises, the country was ready for action.

However, the war on terror or the oil war was also a "counter-insurgency one"¹⁹, which was particularly hard to fight because one needed to wreck enemy and, at the same time, leave the population untouched. Naturally, this required extraordinary political judgment and targeted force, elements the American part lacked or intentionally left aside. In fact, if Americans manage to obtain victory in Iraq they immediately gain on many other plans, such as winning supremacy on oil market and, consequently, global economy. But there are also losses attached to this long-dreamt victory. One such minus would be the immense cost involved in reconstructing the shattered Iraq. With no more European allies to help in sharing the expenses of post-war support, the United States was forced to deposit large funds that could have been otherwise used in the advantage of the American domestic issues.

Left alone in the war for power supremacy, Bush found no strength to put an end to the burning problem of Iraq, nor did he manage to stop the terrorist threat. The grim aura that then surrounded American foreign policy left little freedom of action to the forthcoming chief of state, apart from that of "immediately withdrawing American troops and weapons from Iraq territories and granting them more support in their state expression."²⁰ So what kept Bush from backing off his offensive in Middle East since there was no obvious perspective of winning? A hypothesis could be that fear stands behind this prolonged war, in the sense that "if the Iraq venture ends badly, there will be ample blame to go around the administration."²¹ Also, a sudden withdrawal from Iraq was tantamount to Bush's need to recognize his defeated game- a tough choice for a stubborn and proud president. To a higher extent, America risked the danger of lessening its power and being blamed for any future misdemeanors in the Middle East, as well as for losing credibility in nearing alliances.

Conclusion: What next? Imagining a new world

Needless to say, the implications that were at stake regarding war finality comprised a global analysis. Strategies initiated by the United States, regardless of the decision outcome, were bound to affect both Middle East representatives and European spectators. If, on the one hand, Iraq was kept under American dominance, more serious conflicts could have arisen from moderate Muslim riots and Ba'athists

¹⁷ **Phillips, Kevin**, *American Theocracy: the Perils of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money*, Viking Publishing Ltd., London, 2006, p. 114

¹⁸ **Roberts**, *op.cit.*, p. 3

¹⁹ **Fukuyama**, *Op. cit.*, p. 182

²⁰ **Preble, Christopher**, *Exiting Iraq: Why the US Must End the Military Occupation and Renew the War against Al Qaeda*, Cato Institute, Washington: 2004, p. 18

²¹ **Walt, Stephen**, *The Blame Game*, in *Foreign Policy*, November/December issue, 2005

acceptance of Al Qaeda terrorism. To make matters worse, anti-Americanism could climb to such high levels, that authorities would have been faced with massive destructions and hatred manifestations around American-supporters. On the other hand, however, abruptly ending the war without any previous alliance treaties could have resulted into a severely affected American domestic economy and a derogatory position on the oil market hegemony.

With these issues it goes without saying that the current American president entered a bombed terrain, on which he had to immediately appease conflicts and, at the same time, maintain safe conditions on home fronts. To have taken an incorrect decision would have been tantamount to wrecking what Americans tried to build since their Revolution: democracy and freedom of action. Since nowadays the logo "God Bless America" could very well turn into a prayer for expiating sins, the ultimate conclusion is that America's unique attempt to regain control over the matter must come attached to their being more open-minded and careful when emitting global decisions and more focused on pluriperspectivism rather than individualism.

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