The Vietnam Syndrome and the Iraq War: American exceptionalism and the role of domestic public opinion in US military intervention

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

The thesis reinterprets the Vietnam Syndrome that describes the section of US public opinion that has been hesitant to use military intervention since the failure of the Vietnam War. It makes an original contribution to scholarship by arguing that these sentiments should be understood as being an important part of the broader debate of American exceptionalism, by calling for deeper introspection about the use of military intervention and how the United States can most effectively promote its ideals of democracy promotion, liberty, and free markets, either more as a crusader or exemplar. It builds on existing scholarship by identifying that these attitudes moved the debate beyond the dichotomous paradigm of being either 'internationalist' or 'isolationist' amidst the failure of the 2003 Iraq War. The research uses Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions as the theoretical framework to analyse the domestic political, cultural, and social factors in US foreign policy, and applies them to examining the Vietnam Syndrome. It evaluates the neoconservatives' worldview that was largely shaped in response to anti-Vietnam War protests, as a combination of Wilsonian ideals in democracy promotion, and Jacksonian objectives of primacy to nullify threats to US power through unilateral military action if necessary. The research argues that the neoconservatives regarded the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as defeatist rather than being an important part of US foreign policy debate. The subsequent failures in the Iraq War catalysed greater introspection about the United States' use of military intervention amongst the public and policymakers, compared to the Vietnam War.

Furthermore, Barack Obama's response resonated with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that considered the domestic implications of using military intervention. The thesis argues that Obama attempted to stem decline, rather than accept it, by trying to use US power more judiciously by considering domestic public opinion in his decision-making, and what role military intervention should have to promote US ideals most effectively. He therefore listened more to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when considering the use of military intervention in the effort that the United States could fulfil its perceived role of being an exceptional nation and global leader. This materialised by the development of his 'smart power' strategy that combined using hard and soft power instruments. Obama's smart power strategy reflected his preference for a more diplomatic foreign policy approach, including with traditional adversaries such as Iran. Obama sparingly used military intervention such as in Libya and Syria to avoid protracted conflicts to prevent provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach. His presidency therefore represented a significant fault-line in the debate about American exceptionalism regarding what US power could achieve, and how the United States should promote its values and ideals.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research thesis will provide a unique contribution to International Relations academia by arguing that the concept of the 'Vietnam Syndrome' needs further exploration to understand the role of American public opinion in US foreign policymaking towards military intervention. The research will further develop the existing scholarly analysis of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the 2003 Iraq War. This will be by making original empirical contributions by examining how the failure of the Iraq War prompted attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to have a larger role in broader debates about American exceptionalism. The research will analyse the effect of this section of public opinion on debates about the global role of the United States and how it should promote its ideals and how it influenced President Barack Obama's decision-making towards military intervention. Furthermore, the thesis will demonstrate an original use of Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions theory by applying it to analysing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and American exceptionalism. Studying these together reinforces how domestic historical, political, and cultural considerations and debates about the way the United States regards itself in the world influences its decision-making concerning military intervention and projecting its power and beliefs.

The research proposes that the public attitudes that expresses scepticism towards military intervention, known as the Vietnam Syndrome, should not be regarded as merely impulsive anti-war sentiments to avoid similar military quagmires to the Vietnam War. The thesis argues that these attitudes should be reinterpreted as the American public calling for deeper introspection about the use of military intervention. This section of American public opinion tries to be part of the debate about establishing how to use military action in the national interest, alongside fulfilling America's perceived indispensable role as a global leader to promote democracy, free markets, and liberty.

The analysis contends that two key connections between the Vietnam War and the Iraq War, previously discussed in scholarship, needs to be built upon by further investigating the subsequent developments of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to improve understanding of the broader debate about American exceptionalism and the use of military intervention The neoconservative political movement largely developed out of frustration towards the more circumspect public views towards military intervention that developed post-Vietnam, known as the Vietnam Syndrome. In response, neoconservatives encouraged unilateral military intervention to enhance American power and promote democracy. Individuals in the movement became key members of the George W. Bush administration and influenced the planning and execution of the Iraq War. The first link therefore between the two conflicts that needs more emphasis is the tension between the neoconservatives and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome has been framed as being about the ideological goals of

American exceptionalism and the anti-war public sentiments being in opposition with one another (McCrisken, 2003). However, this research will provide further needed academic exploration of how the Vietnam Syndrome must be understood as being an important part of the American exceptionalism debate regarding how US ideals can be most effectively promoted, and on what role military intervention should have in doing so as either a more crusading or exemplary state.

The second significant connection is that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome developed after the failures of the Iraq War by becoming a more legitimate section in American public opinion to policymakers. This opened political space for greater introspection on the wider debate about America's global role. This was partly because there was not an immediate enemy perceived to be an existential threat during the Iraq War and broader War on Terror, nor such bitter domestic divisions. This contrasted with the background of the Vietnam War's failures, when the threat of Soviet Communism loomed, and domestic divisions were so extreme that violence occurred between protesters and supporters of the war. Consequently, the American public had an opportunity to be more introspective about the use of military intervention when the Iraq War was deemed a failure, and few remained willing to defend it staunchly and aggressively. Therefore, amidst the failure of the Iraq War, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome became more legitimate in US foreign policy debate. The thesis argues that Obama developed a restrained foreign policy approach in response to this important development of the American public asking deeper questions about US foreign policy amidst the failure of the Iraq War. He consequently considered more seriously the efficacy of military intervention for promoting its ideals to live up to being the indispensable moral global leader the United States regards itself to be. Therefore, he moved debate about the role of military intervention in America's foreign policy approach beyond longstanding framings of being supposedly internationalist or isolationist (Dunn, 2005), which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had originally tried to explore.

Obama entered office in January 2009, inheriting one of the most controversial US wars in recent history, the Iraq War, alongside the Afghanistan War. When Obama took office, the Iraq War especially had become a military quagmire that had lost the majority of domestic support. As a presidential candidate, Obama capitalised on his consistent opposition to the Iraq War since it began. He garnered strong support by advocating a reassessment of US foreign policy and interventions. Domestic scepticism towards interventionism grew after the prolonged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan begun by President George W. Bush. However, the threat of Islamic terrorism persisted which Obama could not ignore.

Obama outlined his approach towards interventionism in his autobiography, explaining, "I believed that America's security depended on strengthening our alliances and international institutions. I saw military action as a tool of last, not first resort" (2020:p.447). This was Obama's approach for larger-scale military intervention, but he showed a willingness to use more unilateral action for smaller and more targeted operations, such as his use of special forces to kill Osama bin Laden and drone strikes. Although Obama had advocated for greater multilateralism that differed from Bush's more unilateral approach to the Iraq War without a United Nations (UN) resolution, implementing it in his foreign policy approach was challenging. The lack of transparency that surrounded the Iraq War (unlike the Afghanistan War), due to the lack of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and the subsequent military quagmire provoked hesitancy towards military intervention amongst the American public or an adventurous foreign policy approach. This was comparable to the mood after the Vietnam War, as has been compared and analysed in scholarly literature (Dumbrell & Ryan, 2007).

Americans had been broadly supportive of the Vietnam War at 61% until 1965 (Gallup, 2016), which initially had a more transparent rationale, whereby the South Vietnamese Government asked for US support in the 1950s. However, problems around transparency materialised in the 1960s due to the credibility gap between what the Lyndon B. Johnson administration claimed about the progress of the war and what was being reported. Consequently, a more guarded attitude developed towards interventionism after the failure of the Vietnam War, with only 28% supportive of protecting nations militarily and taking on a duty to protect world order (Rielly, 1975). This circumspect set of public attitudes became known as the Vietnam Syndrome.

Marvin Kalb, the founding Director of Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, and foreign policy visiting scholar at the Brookings Institute, defines the Vietnam Syndrome as:

The belief, born of brutal experience during the Vietnam War, that never again will the United States gradually tiptoe into questionable wars without a clear-cut objective, overwhelming military force, an endgame strategy and, most important, the support of Congress and the American people. In today's world of terrorist threat and guerrilla war, the Vietnam Syndrome means, if nothing else, a fundamental reluctance to commit American military power anywhere in the world, unless it is absolutely necessary to protect the national interests of the country (2016).

The early stages of the Vietnam War was argued to be in the national interest to contain communism and in 1965, 60% of Americans believed it was not a mistake to send troops there (Gallup). However, by August 1968, a majority of Americans at 53% believed it was a mistake and

many lost sight of the war's purpose when it protracted for nearly two decades with little progress, and opposition to the draft increased. Kalb argued that the relevance of the Vietnam Syndrome to US foreign policy especially increased during Obama's presidency after the Iraq War's failure (Ibid). Contrary to anti-American views, (Milne, 2001), US foreign policy debate about interventionism has been more multifaceted than Americans favouring militarism at most given opportunities (Jackson, 2011), like caricatured warmongers. The reality is that America has varied its position on the use of interventionism, shifting back and forth between sympathising with internationalism and isolationism, as well as interventionism and restraint, depending on how presidents, groups relevant to policymaking and domestic public opinion see these foreign policy approaches being in American interests.

Military intervention in US foreign policy, and the American public's role in establishing a rationale to use it, is of course complex. The subject predates the Obama administration, the idea of the Vietnam Syndrome in US foreign policy debate, and the wars in Iraq and Vietnam. Since its independence, America has internally debated how proactive it should be in world affairs. President George Washington emphasised his belief in the importance of Government valuing public opinion in domestic or foreign policymaking during his farewell address. He advocated for non-interventionism,, though warned of the need to be prepared for conflicts in order to avoid them, and including public opinion in decision-making. He stated that:

In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened. As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it (1796)

Additionally, Washington warned against foreign entanglements, asking, "why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor, or caprice" (Ibid)? The debate became more prominent in the nineteenth century and again post-World War Two when America attained superpower status. Similarly to Washington, John Quincy Adams urged against military adventurism "in search of monsters to destroy" (1821) when he was the Secretary of State.

The development of interventionist attitudes was influenced by President James Monroe and his 1823 Monroe Doctrine. It advocated for deterring European empires, namely Spain, from the Americas. After the intervention's success, the idea that America could have a global role as defenders of democracy grew in national politics. Monroe regarded any intervention in the political

affairs of the Americas by foreign powers as a hostile act against the US. In his address, he stated that:

With the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States (1823).

The Monroe Doctrine influenced key ideas behind Manifest Destiny, the movement that claimed that America and its people are a superior group, who were divinely chosen to spread its perceived ideals of freedom and democracy to justify expanding its territory (O'Sullivan, 1845). According to Walter McDougall, the Monroe Doctrine formed a closely related nexus with Manifest Destiny, "because while the Monroe Doctrine did not specify expansion, expansion was necessary in order to enforce the doctrine. Concerns in the United States that European powers were seeking to acquire colonies or greater influence in North America led to calls for expansion in order to prevent this" (1997:p.74). Manifest Destiny influenced the 1846-48 Mexican-American War, led by President James Polk, who won the 1844 election, and therefore public support (albeit amongst a small eligible electorate), on the promise to annex Texas and Oregon to also win support from anti-slavery Northen expansionists (Greenberg, 2012:p.33). Anglo-American inhabitants of Texas had declared independence from Mexico in 1836, calling itself the Republic of Texas, which the United States recognised, but the Mexican government regarded it as a rebellious province. On March 1, 1845, the then outgoing president and predecessor to Polk, James Tyler, signed a bill passed by Congress, authorising the US annexation of the Republic of Texas which contributed to starting the Mexican-American War. It later formally began after the 1846 Thornton Affair when Captain Seth B. Thornton was ambushed by Mexican forces near the Rio Grande. Polk subsequently persuaded Congress to declare war, despite opposition from Whigs such as the then Illinois Congressman, Abraham Lincoln. The conflict resulted in the United States vastly increasing its territories by gaining control of Texas with Mexican recognition, as well as California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, most of New Mexico and Arizona, and parts of Wyoming under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The conflict and the broader Manifest Destiny movement was influenced by the ideology of American exceptionalism.

Early ideas of American exceptionalism were posited by Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop in his 1630 sermon to the fellow puritans who had arrived. He claimed that the newly populated land had become inhabited by divinely chosen people whose unique virtues made it a "city upon a hill" (1630) that would be an example for the world to emulate. The term was

later repeated by the then President-elect, John F. Kennedy (1961), and more famously by President Ronald Reagan in his farewell address (1989). American exceptionalism ideologically argues that the United States represents the New World of classless 'land of opportunity' that contrasts from the European Old World class-system. "The Mayflower left behind in Europe the experiences of class, revolution, and collectivism out of which the European socialist movement arose" (Hartz, 1974). The ideology of American exceptionalism further evolved during the eighteenth century Revolutionary War against Britain. It inspired the belief that the United States was uniquely founded on ideals of egalitarianism through constitutional republicanism, liberal democracy, free markets, and liberty to build on its classless society that the world would benefit from replicating (Lipset, 1963). Ideas and debates around American exceptionalism did not evolve further until the nineteenth century. The French political thinker, Alexis De Tocqueville, claimed that "the great advantage of the Americans is that they have arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution; and that they are born equal, instead of becoming so" (1835).

Manifest Destiny was inspired by American exceptionalism that encouraged coercive, militaristic, and expansionist US foreign policy approaches, as opposed to leading by example. Notably, Frederick Jackson Turner's 'Frontier Thesis', argued that Westward expansion resulted in more democracy (1894). However, these claims are controversial because the territorial changes involved the killing and displacement of Native Americans and the increase of black enslavement (Horsman, 1981). Nevertheless, it was significant to shaping the early debate about whether to promote the exceptional virtues and values that many Americans believe they possess through interventionism or non-interventionism. The presidents from the Democratic Party, Andrew Jackson and his protégé, Polk, supported interventionism, in the claim of proactively promoting America's perceived values as "vindicators"(Brands, 1998:p.30) through the Manifest Destiny movement. Contrastingly, Republican presidents such as Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant advocated for non-interventionism and restraint by practising democratic values at home as "exemplars" for others to follow (Ibid), similarly to Winthrop's encouragement to be a 'city upon a hill'.. American exceptionalism and its ideas therefore has a longstanding influence on US foreign policy. The different ideological approaches were also central to debates about military intervention during the Vietnam War when a section of public opinion became more involved in foreign policy debates about the global role the United States. This section of the American public encouraged greater consideration about the use of military intervention to promote US ideals, that became known as the Vietnam Syndrome, and it later grew in significance during the 2003 Iraq War.

American public opinion first began to become notably more involved in the debate about military intervention and promoting American values during the 1898 Spanish-American War. The

public supported Cuban independence against Spanish imperialism as part of promoting freedom, though it was partially influenced by 'yellow journalism', whereby American newspapers exaggerated Spanish maltreatment of Cubans to galvanise public support for war (Campbell, 2003). These factors pressured President William McKinley of the Republican Party, to intervene. "While the exact influence of the press and public opinion on McKinley and his policymaking can never be known, there is no doubt that he was an assiduous reader of the daily press and was sensitive to the developments in public opinion" (Smith, 2010:p.23). The conflict resulted in the fall of the Spanish Empire in the Americas and Asia, and the US gaining territory. Under the terms of Treaty of Paris in 1898 to end the conflict, the US acquired control of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines (Beede, 1994). However, shortly afterwards, the Philippines rose against US rule, marking the Philippine-American War from 1899 until 1902, resulting in thousands of civilian fatalities (Ibid). This resulted in the US introducing the Philippine Organic Act in 1902, giving Filipino men the right to vote for the Philippine Assembly, but under US occupation. Independence would not occur until 1946 under the Treaty of Manila (Ibid).

During World War One, the Democratic president, Woodrow Wilson, encouraged Americans to reject isolationism because he believed that the United States' lack of global engagement allowed threats to grow. "Wilson believed that international security affairs and threats to American interests had fundamentally changed, and required more active and assertive US involvement in global affairs and a new leadership role" (Tomes, 2014). After the German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare resulted in the sinking of the ocean liner, RMS Lusitania in 1915 that killed 128 American citizens, the public began to support entering the war to fight Germany. "The use of unrestricted submarine warfare is often seen as the 'smoking gun' in the United States entry into the First World War and is perhaps the most important factor in persuading the population of the United States of the need to oppose Germany" (Cox, 2017: p.49). Wilson campaigned to keep America out of the war in the 1916 presidential election, using the slogan "America First", and he persuaded enough of the electorate to win (Rauchway, 2016). However, Wilson felt provoked into entering the war after British intelligence intercepted the Zimmerman Telegram in 1917. The German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmerman wrote to the Mexican Government, requesting it to join the war, and in return, aid would be provided to retake Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. When Wilson publicised the letter, it further increased US public support to enter the war (Tuchman, 1958).

Consequently, Wilson supported an internationalist foreign policy approach, and he stated to Congress in his declaration of war that "the world must be made safe for democracy" (1917). This later inspired Wilsonianism, which advocates for democracy promotion, self-determination, collective security, and multilateralism (Ambrosius, 2002:p.42). "Wilson's version of American

exceptionalism looked outward, professing a sense of America's duty to wield its growing power responsibly, bring democracy to the world and build strong, enduring alliances and institutions that could calm potential flashpoints and end conflicts" (Tomes, 2014). The creation of the UN in 1945 to promote global cooperation, peace and collective security was influenced by Wilson's earlier idea of the League of Nations.

However, Wilsonian ideals were not enthusiastically embraced by Americans, which prevented him from putting them into practice, exemplifying the significance of domestic politics in US foreign policy. Consequently, Wilson failed to persuade Congress to ratify joining his conceptualised League of Nations. The Republicans argued that America's priorities should be to rebuild the country after war, rather than the world. The 1920 Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding argued that "America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration" (1920). Harding went on to win the popular vote by a margin of 26.1% (1920). Therefore the American public rejected Wilsonianism when the Democrats endorsed its ideas in their election campaign despite Wilson not rerunning himself. America subsequently adhered closer to isolationism during the interwar years.

When World War Two began, both Congress and the American public showed little appetite to being involved because they regarded it as a European conflict. Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt supported Britain and France, he was constrained by a series of Neutrality Acts from 1935 to 1939, introduced by Congress leading up to the war. The legislation forced President Roosevelt to adopt an arms embargo on belligerents involved in the war. The influential pressure group the America First Committee, whose spokesperson was the aviator Charles Lindbergh, lobbied to keep America out of the conflict. "America First" was later used by the forty-fifth President Donald Trump to promote non-interventionism (2017), reflecting its lasting resonance with sections of the American public. According to Gallup, the general public agreed with Congress, with 80% opposed to intervening in Europe as late as the summer of 1941 (Gallup). The public mood only drastically changed after the Pearl Harbor Attack on December 7, 1941, which drew America directly into World War Two against Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany with 97% of support (Gallup).

After Pearl Harbor, engaging in international affairs became more central to American security and interests. American isolationism during the interwar years became retrospectively seen as counterintuitive, short-sighted, and partly responsible for Pearl Harbor because American inaction empowered adversaries. Pearl Harbor made internationalists feel vindicated. Even the leading isolationist and once Republican presidential hopeful, and senator for Michigan from 1928 until 1951, Arthur Vandenburg, conceded that "my convictions regarding international cooperation and

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collective security for peace took form on the afternoon of the Pearl Harbor attack. That day ended isolationism for any realist" (1952).

Post-World War Two, US foreign policy marked a clear break from the interwar years towards an internationalist approach. President Harry S. Truman set a precedent that shaped Cold War US foreign policy. America began to engage in international affairs beyond its direct national security interests, taking a larger role in influencing the international order to prevent repeating the mistakes of the interwar years. Truman outlined to Congress what became known as the Truman Doctrine to contain communism, telling a joint session of Congress in 1947, that "we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies", which was a key principle of the Truman Doctrine (1947). Truman demonstrated his commitment to containment when intervening in the Korean War from 1950 until 1953 because of his concern about Japan's security against Communism (Kim, 1973:p.46). He therefore led a militarily intervention with the UN to support South Korea, against North Korea, which was supported by the communist regimes of the Soviet Union and China. The fighting ended in an armistice with no peace treaty and the conflict has therefore still not officially between the Communist North Korea, and liberal democratic South Korea that the territory divided into. Truman's handling of the Korean War was criticised, which ultimately ended his presidency, and he did not seek re-election in 1952. Nevertheless, the public supported the war in principle, polling at 50%, whilst 36% called it a mistake by 1953 (Gallup). US foreign policy is therefore not one-dimensional and debates about US public attitudes towards interventionism and its purpose often has cycles in determining whether the US moves towards internationalism or isolationism.

Why then, does the Vietnam Syndrome stand out? Why did the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, and their effect on Obama create unique crossroads when assessing the role of American public opinion in US foreign policymaking compared to previous wars, and how are they connected? This thesis addresses the need to further add to the scholarship concerning the fundamental importance of the Vietnam Syndrome in US foreign policymaking and the need to improve the understanding of the sentiments it captures. Furthermore, the research develops a stronger and original scholarly analysis of why the failure of the Iraq War prompted an evolution of the debate about the Vietnam Syndrome. The American public reflected more deeply about what conditions were acceptable for interventionism compared to the aftermath of Vietnam, which influenced Obama. For clarification, the analysis concerns 'boots on the ground' intervention that has been a prominent characteristic of US foreign policy in recent history. But first, the Vietnam Syndrome must be contextualised within US foreign policy to understand what it actually represents in US public opinion and its impact on policymaking.

The Vietnam Syndrome

The Vietnam Syndrome as a term was formulated by neoconservatives. According to John Mearsheimer, "the idealist or Wilsonian strand of the neoconservatives' theory of international politics focuses on promoting democracy, which they believe is the most powerful political ideology on the face of the earth. Moreover, neoconservatives divide the world into good states and bad states and argue that democracies are the white hats". (2005) However, neoconservatives differ from Wilsonian principles through their hostility towards international institutions. Neoconservative foreign policy grew out of Democrats who supported America's involvement in Vietnam under President John F. Kennedy and defended it after its failure. Kennedy was an interventionist, believing in proactively promoting American values abroad. In his inaugural address, Kennedy said, "let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty". (1961)

Kennedy believed in the domino theory that posited that if any nation that fell to communism, then it became a bigger threat to America by globally spreading. Consequently, he increased American involvement in the Vietnam War, increasing troops there from 900 in 1960 a year before he entered office, to 16,300 by 1963, predominantly for advisory rather than combat purposes (Pike, 2021). Kennedy's Democratic successor Lyndon B. Johnson escalated the war further after the Gulf of Tonkin incident when on August 2, 1964, US destroyers exchanged shots with North Vietnamese boats. A second incident was then falsely reported that Johnson then used to rally public support and pressure on Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that that gave him the authority to put US military directly into combat. After winning the 1964 election against the Republican foreign policy hawk, Barry Goldwater, Johnson escalated the war. On March 2, 1965, Johnson launched the bombing campaign, Operation Rolling Thunder, and on January 30, 1968, he significantly escalated by number of ground troops when he commenced the Tet Offensive. Johnson consequently sent 536,100 troops in Vietnam by the end of 1968 and his presidency (Ibid).

Like Kennedy, neoconservatives support high levels of US military global presence to spread liberty. Henry Jackson, the Democratic senator for Washington state, and former Chair of the Democratic National Committee is regarded as the pioneer of neoconservative foreign policy. He ran twice for president in 1972 and 1976 on a hawkish foreign policy platform, defending the Vietnam War when the Democratic Party became anti-war. The anti-war stance was electorally disastrous. George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic nominee, campaigned for an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, but heavily lost to President Richard Nixon, winning only Washington D.C. and Massachusetts (Liep, 2021). Although Jackson's two bids were unsuccessful, his worldview that

America is a force for good by promoting democracy against totalitarianism and evil, that drove his defence of the Vietnam War remained influential in US foreign policy. Jackson's views particularly resonated with President George W. Bush's foreign policy advisors and strongly influenced the ideological motives behind the Iraq War. In 1976, the editor of Commentary, Norman Podhoretz, articulated Jackson's ideas, arguing that dovish liberals had succumbed to pressure from Vietnam War protesters. Podhoretz stated: "Do we lack power? Certainly not if power is measured in brute terms of economic, technological, and military capacity. By those standards, we are still the most powerful country in the world. The issue boils down in the end, then, to the question of will" (1976). This argument that the American public lacked willpower to win wars became central to the neoconservative view of the Vietnam Syndrome.

The 'Vietnam Syndrome' was coined and popularised by Ronald Reagan, during his 1980 presidential campaign. In a speech to military veterans, Reagan claimed that "for too long, we have lived with the Vietnam Syndrome. Much of that syndrome has been created by the North Vietnamese aggressors" (1980). Reagan believed that Americans turned against the Vietnam War because of North Vietnamese Communist propaganda. He believed that the war was an inherently "noble cause" (Ibid), and that the liberal critics "dishonor the memory of 50,000 young Americans who died in that cause when we give way to feelings of guilt as if we were doing something shameful" (Ibid). The Democratic president, Jimmy Carter, wanted to refocus America's foreign policy approach on human rights, instead of defeating Communism by any means. However, Reagan framed the debate about America's global role and intentions as only being positive, arguing America should be unapologetic for exercising power and liberal criticism undermined the country. His use of the term 'syndrome' conveys the idea that public cautiousness towards intervention is an illness, and that a healthy America is when it builds "military power which was so unmistakable that others would not dare to challenge us" (Ibid). Reagan's rhetoric appealed to hawkish Cold War Democrats, like Jackson and working-class voters that became known as "Reagan Democrats" (Curry, 2004).

Nevertheless, Reagan's interpretation of the Vietnam Syndrome was overly simplistic. Reagan and neoconservatives identified sceptical American attitudes towards intervention after the Vietnam War which requires further academic study. However, they did not consider the strategic complexities of asymmetric warfare against insurgencies, or that force alone cannot implement political change. This interpretation also fails to consider that the American public may have more nuanced conditional support for intervention that considers how the United States can live up to being an indispensable nation after suffering defeat. This was particularly significant in the context of the deeply rooted narrative of American exceptionalism amongst Americans that believes that its global power can only ascend. Furthermore, justifications for military intervention to fulfil that

exceptional role can be based on the direct national interest to pursue power, or more idealistic goals of democracy promotion, and requires more clarity on how it will be effective and successful.

Building on Kalb's interpretation, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome can be better understood as requiring four necessary elements to ensure that public opinion can maintain and underpin a successful US military intervention: firstly, through building public support for intervention; secondly, through the Government providing transparency to explain its rationale; thirdly through policymakers responding to public opinion as it changes over time, particularly whether intervention is worth its costs through communicating a persuasive purpose, especially as fatalities increase; and finally, through formulating a defined and achievable exit strategy. David Ryan developed a similar criteria for US military intervention that considers the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome (2007). The absence of all four of these key features undermined popular support for the Vietnam War itself. Public support for military interventions thereafter depended on whether these issues are addressed to prevent a similar outcome to Vietnam. An intervention's rationale could be for humanitarianism, or national security, but the Government cannot justify long-term intervention that appears to lack purpose and becomes a costly quagmire. When the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome became sensitive, it was therefore a public call for deeper introspection about how America can most effectively promote its ideals, and what role military intervention should have in this aim.

Reagan implicitly re-evaluated his assertion that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were about the government succumbing to public opposition and being afraid to let America win (1980). His foreign policy approach showed more restraint than his early rhetoric after the 1983 Beirut bombing in a multinational force peacekeeping mission during the Lebanese Civil War. The incident killed 241 US military personnel, the highest death daily toll since the first day of the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive (BBC, 1983). It prompted Reagan's Defence Secretary, Casper Weinberger, to author the Weinberger Doctrine to outline a more restrained foreign policy with criteria to be taken in future interventions that considered how to try to avoid a similar quagmire to the Vietnam War. Weinberger said that:

Before the US commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress. This support cannot be achieved unless we are candid in making clear the threats we face; the support cannot be sustained without continuing and close consultation. We cannot fight a battle with the Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops not to win, but just to be there (1984).

Weinberger's principles were further developed by the Powell Doctrine authored by President George H.W. Bush's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Vietnam War veteran, Colin Powell. The Powell Doctrine was specifically applied to the 1990-1991 Gulf War after the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, presenting eight questions to answer to justify intervention: is it "a vital national security interest threatened? Do we have a clear attainable objective? Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analysed? Have all other non-violent policy means been fully exhausted? Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement? Have the consequences of our action been fully considered? Is the action supported by the American people? Do we have genuine broad international support"? (Walt, 2013) Notably, having strong US public support was a key condition for Weinberger and Powell. Therefore, the doctrines created by Weinberger and Powell respectively, and the eight conditions made by the latter because of his experience in Vietnam, reflected the tangible legacy of the conflict on the Pentagon towards military intervention and public opinion. The Vietnam War had also had an important influence on the respective views of Powell and the Pentagon about the merits of having a voluntary army, rather than conscripted one, as was the case in Vietnam via the draft. Christopher Jen, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, from 1989 until 1993, during the period when Powell was the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, recalled how he and Powell shared their opposition to the draft. In particularly, they opposed the disproportionate effect it had on African-Americans over the white population. "Powell saw the strength of the Army as in large measure due to voluntarism. He also understood the volunteer military was good for blacks and other minorities, as well as the country" (2021). The professional US military assorted by soldiers who were there by choice, was emphasised by President George H.W. Bush when he tried to allay the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome during the Gulf War, which will be further discussed in chapter two.

The Gulf War's success through achieving its objectives led President George H.W. Bush to declare that America had "kicked the Vietnam Syndrome" (1991). George H.W. Bush was not a neoconservative, but neoconservatives took his sentiments to mean that public opinion was no longer as constraining because their concerns had been allayed to allow them to pursue grander military enterprises. However, neoconservatives failed to appreciate that the Powell Doctrine did not end or cure the Vietnam Syndrome but worked within its constraints. Furthermore, neoconservatives who served under both George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush regarded the Gulf War's outcome of pushing the Iraqi dictator Saddam and his military out of Kuwait as an unfinished campaign. They were determined to remove him from power, which they later achieved in the 2003 invasion.

The neoconservative idealogue Paul Wolfowitz served George H.W. Bush as his Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 1989-1993, and George W. Bush as his Deputy Defence

Secretary from 2001-2005. In 1992, the Wolfowitz Doctrine was leaked, in which he called for a US foreign policy approach of using its status as the sole post-Cold War superpower to exercise unilateral pre-emptive militarism and democracy promotion (Tyler, 1992). The worldview it proposed draws parallel ideas to Reagan's early Vietnam Syndrome speech that America's safety depended on building unmatched military power to make enemies too afraid to attack. The Wolfowitz Doctrine heavily influenced the Bush Doctrine, as the same principles justified the invasion of Iraq in the 2002 National Security Strategy (2002). When constructing the doctrine, Wolfowitz consulted his neoconservative ally Richard Perle, who became George W. Bush's Chairman of the Defence Policy Board Advisory Committee. What connects Iraq and the Vietnam Syndrome is that Wolfowitz and Perle were advisors to Henry Jackson and shaped their worldview during this time. Bush's Undersecretary of Defence for Policy, Douglas Feith and Director for Democracy, Human Rights and International Operation at the National Security Council, Elliot Abrams also worked for Jackson. These four were key architects of the Iraq War.

Post-Cold War before the 2003 Iraq War, 24/7 news became a phenomenon that gave the public instant access to current affairs. The "CNN effect" during the 1993 US intervention in Somalia raised awareness of foreign policy to the US public (Robinson, 2002). Violent footage of the Battle of Mogadishu where two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down killing 19 US soldiers provoked public outcry. Consequently, President Bill Clinton withdrew troops early before the humanitarian and security objectives were completed. Clinton's wariness of public opinion caused inconsistencies in his foreign policy approach towards intervention. He did little during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide so soon after Somalia but intervened in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 on humanitarian grounds. Memories of the Vietnam War resurfaced, prompting Clinton's Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, to reassure Congress that military intervention in Bosnia would not become a quagmire (Sciolino, 1993). Christopher agreed with the Powell Doctrine's emphasis on having an exit strategy, calling for an "endgame" (Ibid). This resulted in a multilateral approach with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and sustained airstrikes as a diplomatic tool to bring belligerents to the negotiating table, rather than regime change. Therefore, the Vietnam Syndrome and the war's legacy is part of the broader US foreign policy debate rather than only concerning narrow neoconservative views.

The Iraq War, however, was different because it was the first large scale boots on the ground intervention akin to Vietnam with greater public scrutiny. The significant commonality between Vietnam and Iraq that provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was the lack of transparency to the public concerning the rationales of both interventions. The Vietnam Syndrome was not only about US fatalities. As discussed, there were unsuccessful interventions with fatalities post-Vietnam

that did not provoke a similar backlash. Vietnam and Iraq had early public support when they were presented as defensive interventions that protected American interests. Vietnam was justified to contain Communism, and Iraq was justified by pre-emptively removing Saddam as a threat and find WMDs post-9/11.

However, credibility gaps emerged. In Vietnam, President Johnson lied about America's progress in the war, and Saddam had no WMDs in Iraq. It transpired that the Bush administration and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) selectively used information to suggest WMDs existed. Although the simultaneous war in Afghanistan also became a quagmire which scholars might argue caused a "Vietnam Syndrome" from a Security Studies perspective, it did not have equal political importance compared to Iraq, or a link to Vietnam. There was a consistent public consensus that the rationale to invade Afghanistan to fight al-Qaeda was acceptable (McCrisken, 2012:p.1001). In contrast, the wars in Vietnam and Iraq breached public trust. But unlike Vietnam, Iraq was a neoconservative venture, which meant that they had full responsibility for its outcome, and they lost political influence when it failed. Furthermore, the scale in the cultural effects and divisions of both wars between the public reactions drastically differed. The Vietnam War became a part of daily American society, particularly because the draft meant that many Americans were directly affected by the war. Many men had to fight which subsequently increased likelihood that Americans at home either knew someone and heard their stories, or knew a fallen soldier returned in a body-bag. The large stake that many Americans had in the war therefore provoked strong opposition that severely divided the country that brought domestic volatile fault-lines of counterculture as well as race and civil rights to the surface. Consequently, it had an ingrained cultural effect on Americans trying to come to terms with the war, with many depictions through films with different interpretations of the war that built a complex legacy that was unresolved to many.

By contrast, whilst the Iraq War prompted division, it did not have the same culturally ingrained divisions. There were films made about the Iraq War, but because military service was voluntary more Americans could be more detached from the conflict that were not directly affected. Moreover, and the country was more domestically stable because social issues such as civil rights had improved relative to the 1960s. However, the calmer domestic political atmosphere actually helped to allow the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome evolve and gain more legitimacy in a debate about a war that had more consensus that it was wrong. This allowed the US public to become more introspective about when to use interventionism that delved into a deeper debate than pro or anti-interventionism arguments. Further analysis of the different cultural effects in the internal debate about each respective war's failure will be evaluated in more detail in chapter three to examine how and why the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome grew in legitimacy during the failure of the Iraq War.

Obama's consistent opposition to the Iraq War made him more sympathetic to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and he believed that the concerns that they raised should be addressed more. He wanted to establish clearer and more transparent principles to justify when to exercise military intervention. When running for State Senate in 2002, Obama unequivocally opposed the Iraq war, stating "I don't oppose all wars. What I am opposed to, is a dumb war" (2002). Conversely, Obama's principal Primaries opponent, Hillary Clinton, voted for the Iraq War in the Senate. The 2004 Democratic nominee, John Kerry, also voted to invade, undermining his election campaign's criticism of the war (Spicer, 2004).

Obama's message that he would bring change by re-evaluating America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention resonated with voters in his 2008 election. Running with the slogan, "change we can believe in" (2008), Obama sent a clear message about rebuilding public trust. As the first African-American president, Obama created a sense that America could create a new progressive foreign policy and domestic agenda in a nation historically tainted by slavery and segregation. His victory speech in Grant Park, Chicago, having served as senator for Illinois, was symbolically significant. Grant Park was where violence took place between anti-Vietnam War protestors and the police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention (Achenbach, 2018). Its transformation as a place of celebration four decades later perhaps created a sense that America could look ahead instead of being stuck in the past (Hogan, 2008). Furthermore, this moment captured debate about Obama's presidency, both internationally and domestically of whether he achieved tangible change, or if it was mostly symbolic. The expectation of Obama from parts of the American public and the world was that he would have a bold foreign policy approach. Obama wanted to create a new beginning in foreign policy. This included resetting US.-Russian diplomacy, improving relations with the Muslim world, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by engaging with the traditional adversary Iran and promoting multilateral just wars when considering intervention that did not overstretch America beyond its interests (2014).

However, like many presidents before him, Obama found that achieving his ambitions in reality was challenging. Obama discovered the difficulties of building reliable multinational coalitions in Libya when allies continued to expect America to carry most of the burdens of military intervention (Goldberg, 2016). Moving on from Iraq by calming public concerns and the features of the Vietnam Syndrome by considering new conflicts based on clearer principles also became difficult because Iraq and Afghanistan were unresolved. Nevertheless, world events did not stop, and new international crises, such as the Arab Spring and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) drew America back towards the Middle East when Obama was trying to withdraw. Conflicts in Libya and Syria, as well as Russian aggression against Ukraine by annexing the Crimea tested Obama

and whether America could and would act as a world leader in an environment of domestic and international distrust post-Iraq.

Research questions

The research question interrogated in the thesis is: 'How do the Vietnam Syndrome and US foreign policy relate, conceptually, particularly following the impact of the Iraq War? Under the umbrella of this overarching research question, there are the following sub-questions:

1) What significance does the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome have to broader debates about American exceptionalism and the use of military intervention that requires further examination?

2) Why did the failure of the Iraq War legitimise the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in US foreign policy debate about the use of military intervention to promoting American ideals?

3) How did Obama approach debates about American exceptionalism and America's global role post-Iraq War when considering miliary intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome?

The analysis throughout should answer the research questions and the sub-questions. In doing so, it should unearth the complexities and nuances of the Vietnam Syndrome and its significance to US foreign policy and develop the topic beyond pro-intervention or anti-intervention debate. Too often in America and internationally, debates about US foreign policy and its consequences are oversimplified. Some are unapologetic about American power and intervention, portraying it as an unequivocal force for good. George W. Bush exemplified this by often justifying his policies in the name of freedom (2002).

Conversely, Noam Chomsky denounced US military intervention as "American imperialism" (2004), and the Libertarian Ron Paul, criticised military service as statism, (2007) when it is not simplistically sinister. There are valid arguments that the War on Terror post-911 empowered "neo-imperial thinkers" (Ikenberry, 2002:p.61) to enforce political change, similar to America's historical militaristic foreign policy approach such as the Manifest Destiny movement. However, Chomsky's broad-brush statement that US interventionism is purely imperialistic is rather crude. Wilsonian factors such as democracy promotion and collective security as rationales have been used for US interventionism in multiple conflicts (Cox, 2021), particularly since the movement towards universal values in the twentieth century. Therefore, the debate around military intervention's use is more complex than only being about increasing imperialistic power. Additionally, there is no historical evidence of American governments having ulterior motives to use military intervention to undermine civil liberties.

Scrutinising the utility of military intervention by Americans is valid and navigating acceptable conditions of interventionism to public opinion is challenging. It provokes debate between those promoting military restraint and interventionists arguing that there is an expectation America behaves as the unmatched military, political and economic superpower to demonstrate global leadership, regardless of American public opinion (Kagan, 2021). Therefore, assessing the role of interventionism in America's foreign policy approach is most effectively achieved by establishing when it is in the national and international interest and understanding the limits of what US power can achieve. Obama addressed this in his foreign policy approach because he believed it was necessary, and that the public desired it. Therefore, Obama's approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome requires greater academic attention.

Literature Review

The review will discuss the existing literature on the role of US public opinion in US foreign policy and the attitudes toward the Vietnam Syndrome to explain why there is more to build in this field of scholarship that the research will address. It reinforces the originality of the thesis through its analysis of how the wars in Vietnam and Iraq are particularly linked to the attitudes of Vietnam Syndrome and Obama's foreign policy approach towards military intervention.

The debate about the role of US public opinion in foreign policymaking perhaps gained more attention in the early twentieth century. A useful starting point is the academic work by Walter Lippmann, 'Public Opinion' (1922), which argues that public opinion is often irrational and uninformed on policy debates. To illustrate his argument that the general public is often uninformed and bases its views and opinions on incomplete information, he compares members to theatre attendees entering a play in the third act and leaving before the curtain closes. Lippmann claimed that "the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance" (p.16), and that people consequently "live in the same world but they think and feel in different ones" (p.20). Therefore, he believed that it was best to have policymaking conducted by a "specialized class" to expertly analyse data and geopolitics to present to decision-makers, who would then take their case to the public and "manufacture consent" (Ibid). This phrase was later used by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in their book (1988), in their argument that corporate media with help from enforcers such as think-tanks, has manipulated the public to support hawkish foreign policy approaches in its anti-Communism and later the War on Terror in a 2002 edition.

However, Herman and Chomsky oversimplify public opinion as a monolith, and they fail to consider that policymakers and think-tanks with the media coverage they receive are not representative of public opinion. Indeed, many US conflicts have shown the public often has a range

of views, as previously discussed, from the reluctance to enter both World Wars, as well as lukewarm support for wars in Korea and Vietnam. Furthermore, the post-Cold War political atmosphere was sceptical towards military intervention during Clinton's presidency, as well as being divided along party affiliation for much of the War on Terror and especially the Iraq War. John Dewey's 'The Public and its Problems' (1927), which responded to Lippmann's analysis, agreed that the public is rather uninformed, but that foreign policy should not be delegated to technocratic elites. Instead, Dewey argued that democratic values need to be strengthened to provide greater transparency, through more public engagement and vigilance as a constant and ongoing process. This research therefore builds on some of Dewey's ideas by exploring how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome developed between the wars in Vietnam and Iraq to become significant in US foreign policymaking.

Arguments that the political consequences of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq created 'syndromes' that turned the American public against intervention are not new. The King's College London War Studies Professor, Sir, Lawrence Freedman compared the two wars, and argued that the failures in the Iraq War created "an even more burdensome Iraq Syndrome—the renewed, nagging and sometimes paralysing belief that any large-scale U.S. military intervention abroad is doomed to practical failure and moral iniquity" (2005). David Hastings Dunn further explores Freedman's Iraq Syndrome concept that descript US public hesitancy towards military intervention and its impact on Obama in his essay "The Iraq Syndrome Revisited". Dunn suggests that the ramifications of the Iraq Syndrome attitudes on Obama's foreign policy approach was more consequential than paralysis in US foreign policy. Dunn claimed that it fundamentally shaped Obama's approach to geopolitical challenges. "In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, the Obama administration acted and spoke in a way that indicated the influence of the Iraq Syndrome in its foreign policy disposition" (2017:p.207). Therefore, there is academic acknowledgement that similar domestic political environments developed post-Vietnam and Iraq through their respective failures provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that influenced US foreign policymaking.

Nevertheless, using the phrase, the 'Iraq Syndrome' is misleading because it undervalues the link between the Iraq War between and the neoconservatives' reaction to the Vietnam War that influenced their foreign policy approach. Neoconservatives did not believe that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome deserved much sympathy, and that they could be contained through overwhelming military force in interventions, and the missionary desire to promote democracy abroad and enhance US power. Their hostile response to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome solidified their preference for unilateral intervention as the neoconservatives such as Charles Krauthammer demonstrated. He argued that international cooperation in military action was only a form of "pseudo-multilateralism" (1991:p.25), to placate domestic opinion in which the US provides

the most resources to military interventions because "a large segment of American opinion doubts the legitimacy of unilateral American action" (Ibid).

However, as Melvyn Leffler's book 'Confronting Saddam', explained, that Bush's hubristic and power-driven approach to the Iraq War that did not consider the risks of a quagmire (2023). This resulted in a deeper reassessment of military intervention under Obama. Moreover, this was a continuation of the unresolved debate post-Vietnam that began a process of greater introspection of the purpose of military intervention, and how American ideals can be most effectively promoted which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome originally attempted to explore. Consequently, because it is a development of the same phenomenon, it is appropriate to use the original term when analysing how this affected Obama's foreign policy approach.

Obama himself never formally outlined a foreign policy doctrine. His immediate priority was addressing the economic crisis post-2008. Identifying what guided his foreign policymaking will indicate how he responded to public opinion and its concerns represented through the Vietnam Syndrome. In the quote at the beginning of this chapter from Obama's autobiography, "A Promised Land", Obama argues that security is tied to strong alliances, and that military action should be used as a last resort. His desire to address global challenges multilaterally was a clear repudiation of the neoconservative Bush Doctrine to rebuild trust with the international community. Obama especially sought to improve US relations with Muslim states "to advance the broader effort of combatting terrorism and pressuring Muslim Iran to curb its nuclear program". (Indyk, Lieberthal, and O'Hanlon, 2012:p.14). This contrasted from Bush's aggressive approach by labelling Iran as part of an "axis of evil" (2002). Obama's advocacy for multilateralism broadly resonated with the American general public. Even post-9/11, when public support for ground troop intervention grew to 77%, (2001) Holsti identified a consistent "preference for multilateralism rather than going at it alone" (2011:p.276).

A reoccurring phrase from the Obama administration to describe its foreign policy approach, throughout the two terms was "engagement". The 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) stated that, "engagement is the active participation of the United States in relationships beyond our borders" (p.11). Robert Singh writes in 'Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy. The Limits of Engagement', "force by necessity and choice took a back seat to vigorous diplomacy" (2012:p.47), departing from Bush's unilateral democracy promotion. Singh offers a declinist perspective to Obama's foreign policy. The declinist school refers to the decline of American power. It also discusses alternative grand strategies the United States could choose in order to delay, mitigate, prevent, or prepare for its inevitable decline (Soare, 2013:p.49). Singh's declinist argument posits that "Obama's foreign policy can be best understood as adhering strongly to a 'post-American' conception of world

order- one in which American primacy is steadily but inexorably ebbing, with the president's task being not to stem and reverse, but rather to gracefully manage, that obvious and inevitable decline" (2012:p.4). Obama was contending with relative US decline through the shortcomings of its military power and decreased influence, in addition to more distrust to exercise US power post-Iraq. However, America was not being eclipsed by a rival amongst the international system. Additionally, Singh does not acknowledge that Obama's foreign policy of engagement which attempted to rebuild trust by working more cooperatively with international partners, could have been a way to regain US credibility and power. Obama believed that more American diplomacy, including with adversaries, could achieve this instead of using hard power to pursue its geopolitical goals. Thomas Wright summarises engagement as five sets of interlocutors whom the administration sought to address: civilisations, allies, new partners, adversaries, and institutions (2010).

Obama was therefore reluctant to commit to rigid policies since international politics, especially conflicts that America consider intervening in, is fluid. Trevor McCrisken's essay "No More Vietnams" in the book 'Vietnam in Iraq' cautions against "analogous thinking" when considering intervention because "a major problem is that the two situations being compared are rarely, if ever entirely alike. What worked or failed in the earlier instance, therefore, is unlikely to provide clear guidelines for how a policymaker should deal with the current situation" (2006:p.160). Analogies can therefore distort the judgement of policymakers and the public when looking at future interventions. The details of a potential intervention can consequently be poorly analysed by comparing a previous success or failure to justify support or opposition for it when at the same time neglecting proper evaluation of a contemporary geopolitical situation that is different to those before it. Obama in some ways was wary of analogical thinking, which he demonstrated when he expressed reluctance to adopt a "cookie-cutter" (2011) doctrinal foreign policy approach.

McCrisken also acknowledged that historical analogies are used by proponents of intervention. McCrisken cites the lead up to the Gulf War when President George H.W. Bush compared Saddam's aggression to Hitler when making his case to intervene, saying that, "as was the case in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbours" (1990). McCrisken labels the interventionist historical reference as the "Munich analogy" (2006:p.160), describing interventionist's argument as being that war is sometimes the best option because history shows that appeasing dictators encourages aggression, as happened when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia after the 1938 Munich Agreement (Faber, 2010). McCrisken omits however, the Munich analogy's significance to the 2003 Iraq War to remove Saddam, which further strengthens his analysis. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, referenced the misjudgement of the Munich Agreement to persuade Parliament to join Bush in invading Iraq before Saddam became, as

Blair claimed, too big a threat by possessing WMDs, which he argued appeasement would allow. Blair stated that, "the only relevant point of analogy is that with history, we know what happened. We can look back and say: there's the time; that was the moment; for example, when Czechoslovakia was swallowed up by the Nazis--that's when we should have acted" (2003). However, the war's failures, which included underestimating the difficulty of making Iraq politically stable, demonstrated that the emotive potency of analogies can equally risk overlooking specific challenges of possible interventions during debates.

Geoff Simons' book. 'Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on US Foreign Policy, examines the psychological traumatic effect that the failure of the Vietnam War on the American public and foreign policymakers. Simons argues that questions of morality about the Vietnam War were not important to Americans. He stated that "the horrors brought to Vietnam had little influence in shaping the Vietnam Syndrome—sired as it principally was by *American* defeat, *American* pain, and *American* anguish. If the United States had committed all those horrors and more, and won the war, there would have been no Vietnam Syndrome" (1998:p.xx). Furthermore, he claimed that "a principal 'lesson from Vietnam' was how Washington should aim to win a necessary war *by using unconstrained military* power: in short, by committing war crimes in the accomplishment of victory rather than the suffering of defeat" (p.xxv).

However, whilst the American public reaction to the failure of the Vietnam War and the subsequent attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was largely about their own pain rather than the Vietnamese, there is historical evidence that Americans did show concern about the moral conduct of the war and did not win want to win by any means. This was demonstrated by the Americans' emphatic rejection of the Republican presidential candidate for the 1964 election, Barry Goldwater, to swiftly win the war by using nuclear weapons. President Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign used the 'Daisy' advert to warn about the destructive consequences nuclear weapons (1964). The advert helped Johnson win by a landslide with forty four states plus D.C. compared to Goldwater winning only six states. Additionally, Simons did not consider how the trauma expressed by the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that he highlighted, provoked deeper ideological questions amongst Americans about their sense of exceptionalism and the use of military intervention to promote their ideals. His conclusion that the lesson was that the US should use unconstrained military power by committing war crimes to win wars was broadly believed by the neoconservatives. However, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that the neoconservatives were hostile towards, encouraged deeper reflection on how and when the US should use military intervention to fulfil its perceived role as an exceptional and pre-eminent nation.

Therefore, this research will cast new light on how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome have an important part of the broader and continuous debate on American exceptionalism. Colin Dueck provides an important understanding of the two main Schools of thought to promoting US ideals of liberal democracy, free markets, and liberty as 'crusaders' and 'exemplars'. The crusaders can also be referred to as 'vindicators', as was mentioned earlier when discussing Henry Brands's terminology. Dueck explains that "'crusaders'—has argued that that the United States must promote democracy and freedom abroad, by force if necessary. This school of thought is interventionist, but to classical liberal ends. Crusaders believe that the United States should root out authoritarianism overseas, and remake the international system in order to preserve the American experiment at home" (2008:p.22). In contrast, "according to exemplarists, the United States should remain somewhat detached from the messiness of international politics; it should provide sanctuary for freedom, but it should follow a strategy of non-intervention with respect to military conflict overseas" (Ibid). Exemplarists do not have to be isolationist, and they can be advocates for restraint towards using military intervention whilst supporting limited engagement in international affairs by encouraging others to adopt US ideals through diplomacy rather than coercion.

Hilde Restad argued that "three ideas make up American exceptionalism—the belief in America's superiority, its historical mission, and that the United States shall rise to power but never decline" (2014:p.225). She emphasised the importance of superiority to the ideology of American exceptionalism to enhance power and security that she argued, encourages varying degrees of unilateral action between different presidents in foreign policymaking. The Iraq War reflected an aggressive unilateral approach to pursuing superiority, whilst Obama's restraint was less imposing. However, Restad also argues that US unilateral internationalism guided Obama. She stated that "by 'unilateral internationalism' then, I mean that the United States has maintained as much manoeuvrability as possible while engaging other countries, either through lax formal obligations or overwhelming control of decision-making bodies governing the rules of interaction" (p.11). She argued that this also guided Obama because his "attempts to promote international institutions as an addition to, not replacement of US hegemony—as President Barack Obama very carefully hinted at in his speech at West Point in May 2014" (p.236). Obama therefore believed that liberal democracy and free markets were superior political ideas which he encouraged others to follow, and to maintain US power. Nevertheless, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome exposed fault-lines amongst Americans in the debate about American exceptionalism, especially after the Iraq War. It brought more into question the perception of the United States' superiority and credibility in promoting its ideals through military intervention, or even without using it. The thesis argues that this debate heavily factored into Obama's foreign policymaking, therefore challenging the assertion

that he simply followed the approach of unilateral internationalism. The public reaction to the Iraq War through the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome is an important part of the academic literature on American exceptionalism.

Literary analysis of the theoretical framework

Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions that he developed in 'Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World' (2001), will be the predominant theory used throughout the thesis. His work draws on the work of David Hacker Fischer's "Albion's Seed" (1989) in which Fischer outlines four folkways that came to the United States from Great Britain. The first came from the English Puritans that travelled from East Anglia to Massachusetts between 1629 and 1641. The second came from a movement of 'distressed Cavaliers and indentured servants' from southern England to Virginia from 1642 to 1675. The third traces migrants from the north Midlands to Delaware between 1675 and 1725. Finally, the fourth was the arrival of Scotch-Irish from the Borderlands of Britain and Ulster, in a series of migration waves between 1717 and 1775 (Ibid). These groups came to dominate American cultural and political life through their language and beliefs, suppressing minority alternatives.

Mead extends Fischer's work by identifying what he labels the US Foreign Policy Traditions after four significant figures: Wilsonians, Hamiltonians, Jacksonians and Jeffersonians. Using these four groups as a theoretical grounding will be useful to analyse the significance of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to US foreign policymaking. The traditions have different interpretations of how Americans and policymakers ideationally see the United States' place in the world and how that translates into its actions abroad, such as using military intervention or showing restraint. Domestic politics are a part of the considerations of each traditions and they vary in how they approach public opinion the attitudes of Vietnam Syndrome and decision-making towards military intervention. Using Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions is important for conducting an original scholarly analysis of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the subject of American exceptionalism.

Moreover, the theory is more suitable to use for this research than other International Relations theories that use internal and external political factors in foreign policymaking. For example, neoclassical realism considers ideational factors of the state, the beliefs held by a leader, and domestic public opinion, as well as systemic international factors (Rose, 1998). However, Mead's traditions examines theoretical, but historically rooted internal debates in the United States about how Americans view themselves and want to project their ideals and how this influences US foreign policymaking as crusading military interventionists or restrained exemplars. "Together, they offer a nuanced, socially rooted and culturally sensitive alternative to the traditional analytical language of

International Relations and US foreign policy" (Holland, 2019:p.41). Applying Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions as a framework compliments the examination of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Together, they highlight how specific historical ideas from political leaders and significant events shape the way the United States sees itself, such as being exceptional, and its foreign policy approach. McDougall highlighted that traditions have "commanded solid bipartisan support, outlived the era that gave it birth, entered the permanent lexicon of our national discourse, and continued to resonate with a portion of the American public even during eras when it did not directly inspire policy" (1997:p.10). Consequently, identifying foreign policy traditions are important to improving the understanding of broader historical patterns of a state's behaviour. Therefore, Mead's traditions are a useful framework of how internal ideas and debate have had lasting effects on US foreign policymaking that general International Relations theories cannot capture as well.

All of Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions should be analysed as a normative framework to analyse how they have influenced foreign policy approaches of presidents. For example, it should be acknowledged as this research examines the domestic politics of US foreign policymaking, that whilst perhaps the best known tradition, Wilsonianism, has a significant role in liberal US foreign policymaking and democracy promotion, Wilson as president did not adhere to his own ideals domestically. He reimposed Jim Crow laws and segregation on Federal bureaucratic employment (Wolgemuth 1959). However, all of the traditions should be understood by how they have broadly shaped different worldviews within the United States and its foreign policymaking over time by its adherence to their respective principles. They should not be analysed by evaluating how closely presidents resemble specific characteristics of the presidents who inspired Mead's broader US Foreign Policy Traditions.

Hamiltonianism is regarded as the first US foreign policy tradition by Mead, based on the ideas of the first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Hamiltonians convey their sense of mission in its interpretation of American exceptionalism through promoting free markets worldwide to improve US economic strength. Jack Holland explains that "for Hamiltonians, global flows of money, goods, and people are what tie states together, prevents wars and ensure that the United Sates continues to sit atop a neoliberal world worder…It is not that Hamiltonians are uninterested in democracy and human rights, just that they privilege liberal capitalism as the most important and fundamental component of American security and wellbeing" (2019:p.42). In terms of an example of a Hamiltonian president, Mead argues that George H.W. Bush broadly fits into this category through his use of American power to advance narrow economic and national interests (2010:p.63). Similarly, "through the promotion of free trade and emphasis on the benefits of globalisation, Bill Clinton embodied a Hamiltonian president" (Holland, 2019:p.43). Clinton's presidency oversaw the

beginning of the post-Cold War era that provided the opportunity to work with emerging market economies, especially post-Soviet states that had been under a centralised communist regime. His objective to make free trade a top priority, reflected a quintessential Hamiltonian foreign policy approach. This was demonstrated by his support for the establishing of the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Mexico in 1994, as well as signing three hundred trade agreements, and increasing exports by 74% over his eight years in office (2001). He further showed his Hamiltonian leanings when he gave China a 'Most Favored Nation' status on trade. Furthermore, he signed an agreement in 1999 with China that it would join the World Trade Organization to integrate it into the increasingly globalised economy, which Congress also ratified in 2000 (Ibid).

Wilsonians will be especially discussed in chapter two when analysing their relevance to the neoconservative foreign policy approach. The Wilsonian tradition, named after twenty eighth president, Woodrow Wilson, believes that America has a mission to proactively promote democracy and human rights through military intervention if necessary and that democracies will not go to war with one another. Wilsonians also promote collective security through using international institutions and laws to resolve differences diplomatically and peacefully (Cox, 2021). Mead categorises John F. Kennedy as Wilsonian because of his championing international institutions and democracy promotion. In his inaugural address, Kennedy stated that "the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support", and that, "only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility—I welcome it" (1961). Wilsonianism also influenced the neoconservative belief in democratic peace theory which will be discussed under the umbrella of Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions. It argues that democracies do not go to war, which influenced the Bush administration to invade Iraq. The University of Virginia Professor John M. Owen argues that "the United States' real motives for attacking Iraq may have been complex, but 'regime change'—the replacement of Saddam Hussein's gruesome tyranny with a democracy—was central" (2005).

The Jacksonian foreign policy approach, inspired by the seventh president, Andrew Jackson, is based on military populism that is particularly concerned about threats to United States and protecting its power with 'honor'. "Jacksonianism provides the basis in American life for what many scholars and practitioners would consider the most sophisticated of all approaches to foreign affairs: realism" (Mead, 2000:p.17). Inspired by Jackson's ruthlessness in the American Indian Wars, the tradition believes that this must be done by achieving total victory through destroying enemies with brute force. "Just as Jacksonian opinion resents limits on American weapons and tactics, it also resents stopping short of victory" (p.24). With self-preservation and power fundamental, they are

willing to fight pre-emptive wars, as "Jacksonians have the least regard for international law and international institutions" (p.18). Ultimately, "all that matters to Jacksonian America is the physical survival and wellbeing of the United States and its people" (Holland, 2019:p.42). They believe in American exceptionalism, but more out of a nationalistic sense of American superiority, and threats to its primacy, rather than an idealistic sense of mission. Jacksonians represented a key group amongst policymakers and the American public that was most supportive of the Vietnam War and most critical of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. During the "Vietnam era, a time when Jeffersonians and Jacksonians were fighting in the streets over foreign policy, the former were the most dovish current in mainstream political thought during the Cold War, while the latter were the most consistently hawkish" (Mead, 2000:p.8).

Neoconservatives therefore share key Jacksonian principles such as achieving primacy and having a hostility towards international institutions. Consequently, whilst neoconservatives use Wilsonian rhetoric about democracy promotion, at policy-level they have been Jacksonian. Mead considers Ronald Reagan to be a Jacksonian, since "for most of the other schools, 'complex' is a positive term when applied either to policies or to situations; for Jacksonians it is a negative. Ronald Reagan brilliantly exploited this" (p.17). The George W. Bush administration could overall be seen as Jacksonian, as Holland argues, through being "sensitive to dangers" (Holland, 2019:p.40) and militarily aggressive for narrow self-interests. Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld and their "pugnacious 'Americanism'" (Dumbrell, 2005:36-7) that prioritised US primacy and a readiness to use unilateral military action demonstrated Jacksonian views. Moreover, Bush and the neoconservatives can also be regarded as Jacksonian too. Although neoconservatives possessed some Wilsonian beliefs, such as Wolfowitz, who support for democracy promotion, they did not value international institutions and law, as such, which, is a key Wilsonian pillar, alongside democracy promotion (Cox, 2021). Furthermore, neoconservatives' democracy promotion was particularly selective and more aligned with self-interest and maximising power (Ryan, 2010). Indeed, Krauthammer, acknowledged after the Iraq War began that neoconservatism more closely resembles "democratic realism" (2004) and enhancing US power. Therefore, the Americanists and neoconservatives can both be considered as Jacksonian with their respective worldviews, as "the fate of the world is only relevant if it impacts America. This binary underpinning generates a distinctive foreign policy approach, characterised on the one hand by indifference (easily confused with tolerance) and, on the other hand, by assertive unilateral displays of military force" (Holland, 2019:p.42). Americanists are more explicitly interested in primacy, whilst neoconservatives emphasise democracy promotion more, at least rhetorically. Nonetheless the latter displays a more Jacksonian approach of unilateral military intervention in the aim to maximise American power.

Finally, Jeffersonians, named after principles of the third president, Thomas Jefferson, take a more cautious and calculating foreign policy approach. Jeffersonians believe in democracy promotion abroad, but they are less optimistic about its chances of success compared to Wilsonians. Jeffersonians also believe in American exceptionalism but with more restraint as exemplars to be followed with a limited use of military intervention. They believe that American democracy and republicanism that the Revolution fought for, needs to be nurtured and protected at home before being confident enough to promote it abroad. Indeed, Jefferson emphasised the "vital principle of republics" and having "entangling alliances with none" to avoid becoming involved in foreign affairs that stray too far from US interests in his first inaugural address (1801). For Jeffersonians therefore, "building democracy in one country is enough challenge for them, and they are both skeptical about the prospects of revolutionary victory abroad and concerned about the dangers to the domestic Revolution that might result from excessive entanglements in foreign quarrels" (Mead, 2002, p.181). Obama's greater sensitivity towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and therefore the domestic consequences of foreign policymaking reflected his Jeffersonian approach. He believed that trust needed to be restored with the American public and the values, before going to war after it had been eroded by the Iraq War. Consequently, he demonstrated restraint towards military intervention, which further reflected his Jeffersonian instincts. As Mead explains, to Jeffersonians, "war was not detestable only because of the casualties it caused or the hatreds it fomented but also because it threatened to undermine American democracy at home" (p.186). Therefore, "that war should be the last resort of policy remains a primary pillar of Jeffersonian thought today" (p.190). Obama's caution towards military intervention due to concerns the negative effects it could have for domestic political stability, such as provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, made him a Jeffersonian president. As a Jeffersonian, "military intervention to Obama is rarely the answer to international questions and crises" (Holland, 2019:p.50), particularly when there were sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Instead, Obama believed such action should be taken when there is a more realistic chance of successfully promoting US ideals of democracy and liberty that would also not cause political instability at home.

Just war theory will be used within Mead's framework when analysing Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach and his ideational view of America. This involved navigating how to adhere to the unique qualities he believed America possesses, and applying them to geopolitical challenges that he believed was in the national interest, and that could be meaningfully affected by US involvement. Just war theory outlines conditions of jus ad bellum (the right to go war), which includes establishing a just cause entering war as a last resort, and jus in bello (conduct in warfare), which is concerned with matters such as proportionality of actions, and the treatment of prisoners of

war (Aloyo, 2015). Jeffersonianism therefore particularly links to just war theory by emphasising the preference to enter war as a last resort. Obama used this to appeal to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by encouraging to enter war as a last resort with a just cause, as part of his belief that America had to abide by moral standards as an exceptional nation

Obama emphasised the need to enter just and moral wars by respecting a rules based international system exemplified during his 2009 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Obama encouraged those "to think in new ways about the notions of just war and the imperatives of a just peace" (2009), and that in doing so, "America cannot insist that others follow the rules of the road if we refuse to follow them ourselves" (Ibid). America had to behave consistently to be a global leader, especially when the cause is justified to strengthen its legitimacy. Obama did not go as far as Clinton's democratic enlargement mantra, but he argued "that force can be justified on humanitarian grounds, as it was in the Balkans" (Ibid). Obama's call to uphold international rules may have appeared unspectacular, but it had significance considering Bush flouted it in the to the Iraq War. Furthermore, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach encouraged America to be a better exemplar in upholding its ideals of democracy, freedom, and human rights. This resonated with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst Americans that wanted greater introspection after the Iraq War before engaging in military intervention.

The theoretical literary review has analysed key existing literature about the Obama administration's foreign policy and how it responded to public opinion when considering intervention. Moreover, it has begun to add scholarly analysis to improve the understanding of the Vietnam Syndrome and Iraq War, and how it influenced Obama's foreign policy through introducing Mead's US foreign policy traditions. The traditions are useful guidelines to the different cultural and political attitudes that shape US foreign policymaking and they have not previously been used to examine the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Methodological approach

The research used historical research as the main methodology with some elite interviews to investigate the research questions and thesis for an interpretivist study about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the influence of domestic public opinion in US decision-making towards military intervention. Using historical research fitted neatly into the broader categorisation of an interdisciplinary study of American Presidential History and International Relations. The historical research was conducted by using historical events research, which "involves the investigation of events that either have an important impact on subsequent developments or provide an opportunity for testing the implications of a general theory" (Halperin and Heath, 2020:p.262). This approach was

suitable for analysing how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome influenced US foreign policymaking towards military intervention, after the failure of the Vietnam War and affected subsequent decision-making in the Iraq War and thereafter. The research also utilised the historical process research method, "by examining a series of events that happened over a long period of time to understand how processes have changed over time" (Ibid). This was important for providing the analysis of how the role of domestic public opinion in US foreign policymaking in military intervention has changed throughout US history. The method helped explain why the Vietnam War and the developments of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome represent an important milestone in how the role of public opinion grew in US foreign policymaking. Furthermore, the connection between the Vietnam War and the Iraq War that this research explores, helped improve the understanding of how the 'process' of the broader debate about American exceptionalism and military intervention in response to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome changed over time. These historical research methods are therefore an effective way of using primary and archival sources for examining events.

Historical process research helps form a judgement on how important the administration's interpretation of American public opinion and their attitudes were towards intervention in government policymaking. The research is interpretivist because it evaluates the influence of public opinion on Obama's foreign policy. Consequently, deeper analysis is needed than evaluating American public opinion polls. Further explanation of what those attitudes the polls indicate means for US foreign policymaking is required. Polls can help to understand American foreign policy views. However, this research is not positivist, nor conducted primarily by looking at Obama policies against polls from around the time they were made to assess how closely he listened to public opinion. Rather, the thesis involves cultural political history research of the policymaking process and how significantly the American public's attitudes towards military intervention post-Iraq factored into this process. It was therefore important to analyse how American public opinion and attitudes towards intervention were shaped throughout American history. This helped highlight the critical connection of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq and how they became standout interventions that influenced public opinion and attitudes to explain why what is known as the Vietnam Syndrome, had an important impact post-Iraq on Obama's foreign policymaking and debates about American exceptionalism. This approach does not mean that polling is unimportant, as they provide some insight into the popularity of foreign policy approaches and decision-makers do pay attention to polls. However, as an interpretivist study, the main focus was the policymaking their sense of public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and how responsive decision-makers were during debates of using military intervention. This should be distinguished from a study primarily focused on public

opinion itself and how satisfied or unsatisfied it was with an administration as a way to evaluate Obama's foreign policy approach.

Collecting primary sources through using historical process research helped discuss the perspective of the policymakers themselves and the considerations they had. Obvious primary sources include online White House archives of the Bush and Obama presidencies, covering speeches, weekly addresses, press briefings, presidential actions, and legislation, of the respective Presidencies. However, the more intimate and reflective accounts have come from autobiographies of policymakers, as well as interviews after their service where they have had more time to reflect on their records, and may be less defensive when having their decisions scrutinised. George W. Bush's book "Decision Points" (2010) is a useful text particularly to understanding the emotions behind his choices. Furthermore, it used an interesting format, in which, as the title suggests, he focuses on certain moments in his life and details their significance, including his decision to invade Iraq. Obama's "A Promised Land" (2020) is also valuable source material, as it is one of the main sources that he gives an account of his presidency, and what considerations he made. Moreover, there are also other foreign policy advisors to Obama who have authored books discussing their reflections on their time in office. Ben Rhodes's "The World As It Is" (2019) provides insights into how he helped communicate Obama's foreign policy approach as his Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications. Hillary Clinton's "Hard Choices" (2014) similarly covers her time as the Secretary of State in Obama's first term, and Susan Rice (2019) and Sammantha Power have written about their experience serving as Obama's Ambassador to the United Nations.

Historical process research was important for analysing the main topic of Obama's foreign policy approach and how its formulation was partially influenced by events beforehand. For example, his 2014 West Point speech perhaps most clearly defined his foreign policy principles, at a time when there was a sense of urgency to do so, after Russia had annexed the Crimea three months earlier (Simpson, BBC). The speech indicated that Obama listened more to the public concerns and attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that had become more cautious towards using military intervention post-Iraq. In response, Obama emphasised more of a case-by-case foreign policy approach towards military intervention, rather than condensing its use to being either for or against it to address geopolitical problems. Obama stressed, "America must always lead on the world stage. If we don't, no one else will. The military that you have joined is and always will be the backbone of that leadership. But U.S. military action cannot be the only- or even primary- component of our leadership in every instance" (2014). Through using historical process research, these words can be analysed to assess how he developed policies during a time when the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was sensitive, and how he communicated his decision-making to Americans in response.

For instance, when announcing the Iran nuclear deal, Obama argued that using diplomacy in preference to militarism indicated a deeper introspection about using military intervention that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome wanted by avoiding repeating decisions similar to the Iraq War. He stated, "when I ran for President 8 years ago as a candidate who had opposed the decision to go to war in Iraq, I said that I said that America didn't just have to end that war—we had to end the mindset that got us there in the first place" (2015). Consequently, a process can be seen where the Iraq War heavily shaped Obama's views towards military intervention, and how he addressed the concerns in the Vietnam Syndrome by re-evaluating the threshold for intervention and preferring to use diplomacy.

Interviews also establish how policymakers in the Obama administration interpreted public opinion and attitudes in its foreign policymaking and allow them to elaborate further. Obama's interview with The Atlantic demonstrates the painstaking considerations the administration had in foreign policymaking. It revealed Obama's difficulty in holding a strong multilateral coalition in the Libya intervention and his frustration with European allies. It also reflected Obama's fears of Syria becoming another quagmire like Iraq when considering intervention in Syria. Furthermore, Vice President Joe Biden emphasised the importance of American public support (Goldberg, 2016). Interviews therefore reveal key details. There are different interview formats such as: structured, which resembles a survey of short questions to receive similar answers, unstructured, which are more conversational to extract more in-depth information, and semi-structured which combine planned questions with unplanned to further probe the interviewee. Additionally, semi-structured may not have a strict order of questions like a structured interview (Halperin and Heath, 2020:p.313). Semi-structured interviews are best for this research because complex topics are covered. Furthermore, if noticeable answers need further clarification, follow up questions are important.

Conducting "elite interviews" nonetheless was a useful way to obtain more specific information about policymaking processes for the research. Political elites are those "who exercise disproportionately high influence on the outcome of events or policies" (Pierce, 2008:p.119). Interviewing elites will help the research to understand the Obama administration's foreign policymaking process, and probe further into how much US public opinion factored into it. To organise these interviews, the research will have to look interesting to the prospective interviewee in order for them to participate. Therefore, when making contact, emails must cover three areas: clearly communicating what the research is about and its significance; outlining why their position or former position is important to encourage them to accept with emphasis that the request underlines their status and presenting it as an opportunity instead of a challenge, allowing them to set the record straight and tell their side of events and policies that they were associated with. The manner

of the pitch was the same regardless of how senior or junior potential interviewees are. The questions will be based on information collected through historical process research. Naturally, it would have been excellent to get many high-ranking , and lower-level officials to provide important information as interviewees about their involvement in the day-to-day in political processes (George and Bennett, 2005:p.121).

The interviews that I could conduct, varied in their format due to the fact that there were participants were in different parts of the world, which meant that costs and timings needed to be considered. Although there were no face-to-face interviews, it was possible to conduct them by phone and email. For example, Obama's former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta agreed to have phone interview. For this interview, I had prepared written questions for him to be able to think about beforehand, and then we went through his spoken answers, as well as asking some unplanned follow-up questions. The same format took place with the former Israeli minister Dan Meridor, who was in government during the first terms of Bush and Obama's Presidencies. The research also used email interviews with participants as this was more convenient for those that were willing to participate but were more pressed for time. These individuals included Lawrence Wilkerson, who served as the Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in the George W. Bush administration. Similarly, Obama's negotiator for the Iran nuclear deal, Richard Nephew participated through an emailed interview. Both of these were done by writing questions for the participants, and they provided written answers.

Finally, secondary sources of existing analysis were also used to help build on the academic study and interpretations of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Using secondary literature was useful for discussing previous findings and interpretations of primary sources that are relevant to examining the effect of US public opinion on decision-making towards military intervention. Secondary sources and existing scholarship also helped this research further develop academic analysis of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and its importance to the debate about American exceptionalism that emerged during the Iraq War and subsequently influenced Obama's foreign policy approach towards military intervention.

Limitations and ethical considerations of the methodologies

A limitation that affects both the methodologies are the restrictions on certain information because of national security concerns. Therefore, the research appreciated that the classification of documents can last up to twenty five years (1995). This could made some Obama and George W. Bush documents unobtainable due to their relatively recent Presidencies. Similarly, former government officials can only provide limited information because of national security. These ethical

concerns were addressed through communicating to participants what would happen in the interviews, by outlining the format and types of questions that will be asked when approaching them. It was imperative for the interviewee to feel comfortable to answer questions so that they trusted that the research would honestly reflect what they said. This avoided potentially misrepresenting information or allegations of manipulating any findings to suit the research. To quell ethical concerns, I reiterated that participation is wholly voluntary. It was also the decision of the interviewee as to whether they wanted to be recorded, and the interviews could be done without doing so. The participants were also made aware that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason. If there were further questions from the interviewee they were welcome to ask them. Furthermore, after completing the interview, I obtained written confirmation via email that they were happy for it to be used for the research. The research acknowledges here that it was difficult to have a large number of people agree to be interviewed. Therefore whilst relevant figures who served in the Obama administration for example, did not respond to interview requests, such as Ben Rhodes, his book still provided insights into his role in US foreign policymaking as an important primary source (2019). It was also particularly difficult to speak to former Obama officials because some worked for the Joe Biden administration between 2021 and 2025 that coincided with this research. These include individuals such as Sammantha Power, and Jake Sullivan, but both have written works and given on the record interviews to discuss their time in the Obama administration that this research has been able to use. Consequently, the difficulty in having many participants in the research meant that there were not enough interviewees to be a formal part of the methodology. Therefore historical research was predominantly used with interviewees providing helpful information where possible.

Another limitation of using written primary sources and some interviews as a methodology was the possibility that sources and participants could use the exercise to present favourable accounts about their role in policymaking. Although the experience should extract new information, the research needed to evaluate and probe why participants say certain things. For example, if the discussion moves on to more challenging moments during the Obama administration's foreign policy, it may provoke defensive accounts. Obama for example in his Atlantic interview claimed that he was "proud" that he did not fall into what he called the foreign policy establishment that "prescribes responses to different events, and these responses tend to be militarized responses" (Goldberg, 2016). However, Obama received criticism for allowing a humanitarian crisis to preside in Syria and doing little about it, resulting in Putin getting a foothold in the region (Ibid). This critique was reinforced following another chemical attack in Syria after Obama's presidency in 2017, (Amarasingam, 2017), making Obama's diplomatic approach appear naïve and poorly judged, rather

than shrewdly pragmatic. Consequently, interviews should always be done with the consideration that interviewees often try to make their side of an event more flattering, which could make them an unreliable narrator.

Chapter structure

Chapter two further explores neoconservatives' combination of the Wilsonian sense of mission to militarily intervene and its interpretation of American exceptionalism, demonstrated by their belief in democratic peace theory, with their Jacksonian sensitivity to threats and desire to maximise US power. It analyses the connection between the Vietnam War and the Iraq War through the neoconservatives' approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that affected their management of the Iraq War. Furthermore, it discusses how the Holocaust and Arab-Israeli Six-Day War influenced neoconservatives' worldview, in which they believe that fellow democracies need protection, and allies that can help solidify power in hostile regions to America should be supported. This chapter contextualises the neoconservatives' interpretation of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, which they regarded as fundamentally defeatist and therefore undermined the success of military intervention, rather than provide useful introspection to have future success. The analysis also dissects their Wilsonian and Jacksonian characteristics, by discussing how neoconservatives rhetorically used the former ideals of democracy promotion and human rights, but at policy-level, consistently showed more Jacksonian behaviour by prioritising primacy and using unilateral military action to achieve this. Moreover, they would interchangeably use these approaches but frequently show little concern about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The chapter will explain how after the 1991 Gulf War the neoconservatives believe that they no longer needed to be concerned with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This led them to the view that any threat to US primacy needed to be nullified that in the post-Cold War unipolar moment, the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein needed to be removed, especially post-9/11 despite his having no involvement in the attack.

Chapter three analyses how the failures of the Iraq War provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome which became a presidential platform for Obama to advocate for a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that considered domestic public opinion more in decision-making. It discusses how the Bush administration's Jacksonian strategy to have a quick war with limited troops failed and opened brought them into a military quagmire. Moreover, it discusses how the revelation that there were no WMDs in Iraq lost public support for the security rationale for the war. Additionally, it explains how the Bush administration's Jacksonian approach of trying to overwhelm Iraqis into defeat resulted in human rights abuses that undermined the Wilsonian motives and provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore it explains how the

public debate about military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome gained more legitimacy in US foreign policy debate. It compares and contrasts the different cultural domestic effects of the respective wars, such as film and media, and how the less volatile atmosphere during the Iraq War because there was more consensus that it had failed, allowed better introspection about US foreign policy to take place. This differed from the deep divisions during the Vietnam War and its aftermath that meant that the United States struggled far more to come to terms about its global role and how it uses military intervention. Therefore, Obama's candidacy was an important reason, and his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint encouraged deeper introspection about America's approach to military intervention compared to the Vietnam era.

Chapter four examines the Obama doctrine, and his foreign policies principles (Bentley & Holland, 2019). It analyses his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint by listening more to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, it discusses how Obama attempted to protect American power by pivoting away from the Middle East towards Southeast Asia to styme American decline by recognising where power should be distributed towards more pressing geopolitical threats. It discusses Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that shifted towards diplomacy and pragmatism towards traditional adversaries that listened to the domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and preferably avoided military intervention. Furthermore, it analyses his Jeffersonian restraint by attempting to strengthen multilateralism when approaching military intervention and his pursuit of just wars by using it as a last resort to also rebuild trust with the international community. Additionally, it explores the legacy of the Obama doctrine and how it influenced successive presidents to have a more restrained foreign policy approach and effectively complete his objectives of leaving the Middle East.

Chapter five will analyse the formulation of Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that he applied to questions around military intervention, and how he managed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. It will discuss Obama's formulating of his Jeffersonian smart power strategy adopted from Joseph Nye that combines hard power instruments such as sanctions and military intervention if necessary, with soft power measures of diplomacy and persuasion (Nye, 2009). This approach influenced Obama's decision-making towards the 2011 Libya intervention and the Syrian crisis. It will analyse how Obama's more disciplined foreign policy approach that broadly kept to Jeffersonian principles through his smart power strategy that had policy outcomes of using military action judiciously by focusing on results and its effectiveness. This was most clearly seen in the killing of Osama bin Ladin in 2011 that used special forces and the avoided a large-scale operation which therefore avoided risking the provoking of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. It will then discuss how Obama's smart power strategy helped him achieve his Jeffersonian objective of resolving

international disputes diplomatically through negotiating the Iran nuclear deal. This was through combining the use of hard power sanctions and the threat of military intervention, with soft power multilateral diplomacy to curb Iran's programme. This contrasted from his fellow Jeffersonian president, Carter, who managed the post-Vietnam War period and similarly attempted to encourage Americans to reflect more on when to use military intervention. However, Carter's Wilsonian ambitions of promoting human rights and democracy resulted in a muddled foreign policy approach, and he failed to address concerns within the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. In comparison, Obama was more disciplined in his Jeffersonian pragmatism through his smart power strategy to act with restraint and more consistently consider the domestic factors of military intervention such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

It will then analyse Obama's Jeffersonian approach to military intervention, which included trying to put his smart power strategy into action. His approach to intervening in Libya demonstrated this by relying more on multilateralism and burden-sharing with allies. However, it will then analyse the limits of this approach during the 2013 Syria crisis shifted when he could not mobilise allies to militarily intervention after the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons. Obama therefore refused enter a conflict that greater involvement risked entering quagmire like Iraq and provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Syria had little importance to US security or strategic interests and Obama maintained a more disciplined Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that considered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, unlike Carter. It then evaluates the success of Obama's foreign policy approach in achieving his objectives under the circumstances of sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that he sympathised with. Furthermore, it scrutinises how Obama was more successful compared to Carter in addressing difficult questions about the limits of American power in its perceived role as a global leader to promote its ideals. The attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome post-Iraq were sensitive and Americans wanted to focus more on practicing them at home to rebuild its strength, rather than proactively promote them abroad. As a result, Obama had some success in encouraging greater introspection that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had wanted. Chapter six will conclude the thesis and summarise its main arguments.

Chapter 2: The neoconservative worldview and the Iraq War: Prioritising 'America's mission' and primacy, rather than the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome

Introduction

This chapter examines how the Vietnam War catalysed the neoconservative movement and developed their worldview that would influence their approach to domestic public opinion and the Iraq War. The chapter analyses neoconservatives' belief that America has a unique global role that is rooted in American exceptionalism and uses Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions (2001) is used as a theoretical framework to discuss neoconservatives' foreign policy approach. The neoconservatives combined Wilsonian principles of democracy promotion with Jacksonian beliefs of maximising power and nullifying threats by using unilateral military intervention achieve victory at almost any cost. As a result, they prioritised their Wilsonian and Jacksonian foreign policy goals rather than be particularly sensitive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that encouraged restraint when approaching military intervention and the Iraq War. Instead, the neoconservatives regarded the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as defeatist views that undermined the success of potential future military interventions, rather than as an important part in US foreign policy debate. Subsequently, the neoconservatives approached the attitudes combatively by often accusing critics of their militaristic foreign policy approach of being anti-American (Restad, 2014).

Chapter two and chapter three are therefore linked by analysing the significance of the Vietnam War to neoconservatism as a political movement, and how the conflict shaped their worldview and approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when using military intervention, particularly the case of the Iraq War. Chapter three will then examine how the neoconservatives' approach to military intervention and domestic public opinion failed in the Iraq war, which consequently provoked the attitude of the Vietnam syndrome that Obama recognised and gave him a presidential platform.

The early ideas of neoconservatism began as an anti-Stalinist and anti-totalitarian movement amongst American Trotskyite leftists mainly based around New York. They became disenchanted by American Communists' support for Stalinism and were critical of the Soviet Union's human rights violations, its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the 1968 blockade of Berlin (Velasco, 2010: p.26). These ideas were mainly discussed amongst left-wing intellectuals until they became frustrated by the growing domestic public opposition to the Vietnam War amongst progressives, consequently formulating neoconservatism. The individual who most prominently advocated for what became known as neoconservative ideas was Henry Jackson, (not to be confused with Jacksonian foreign policy, which refers to the influence of President Andrew Jackson). Henry Jackson

criticised the counterculture movement associated with student activism and hippies that was part of the New Left. He was quoted saying that "the characteristic element of the New Left is the rejection of authority. The mood is negative, even nihilistic" (Kaufman, 2000:p.174). He urged students to study "the fascinating but shameful decade when Adolf Hitler was building the German war machine while democracies were preaching disarmament and neglecting their military preparedness" (Ibid). The New Left opposed the Vietnam War, and campaigned for social issues such as civil rights, feminism, gay rights, abortion rights and drug reform (Carmines and Layman, 1997). This differed from the Old Left that focused more on class politics and trade unionism. Jackson feared that circumspect attitudes towards military intervention towards the end of the Vietnam War was a sign of America becoming soft on Communism and totalitarianism (Shribman, 1983).

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first part briefly explains the early ideas of neoconservatism that emerged from anti-Stalinism. It then analyses how the aftermath of the Vietnam War formed an alliance between Wilsonians and Jacksonians through combining their respective foreign policy aspirations of proactive democracy promotion through unilateral military intervention, with maximising US power. This section introduces democratic peace theory and the ideals of Wilsonianism and its influence on neoconservatives' foreign policy approach towards interventionism. Neoconservatives believe that America has a unique global role to spread its virtues and defeat evil, making the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome peripheral concerns. Furthermore, it explains the Jacksonian influence of pursuing primacy, and its hostility towards international institutions to achieve this. This differs from Wilsonian beliefs in working with institutions, which ultimately forms neoconservative principles by combining ideas of the two traditions.

The second section explores the significance of neoconservatives adopting the 'lessons of Munich' instead of the 'lessons of Vietnam' when overseeing military intervention and public opinion. In particular, it explains that neoconservatives took the lessons of Munich more profoundly than just opposing appeasement and they were particularly affected by the Holocaust. It exemplifies their belief in American exceptionalism through arguing that America has a special global role and mission to prevent similar atrocities from being repeated. Wolfowitz demonstrated this view when addressing the United Nations (UN) on the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps, stating that, "if there is one thing the world has learned, it is that peaceful nations cannot close their eyes or sit idly by in the face of genocide" (2005). It also explains the significance of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War to neoconservative foreign policy beliefs by provoking fears of a second Holocaust amongst Jewish-Israelis and the Diaspora. Consequently, neoconservatives from Wilsonian and Jacksonian traditions considered Israel to be an important ally after the war. Wilsonians believed that Israel was an important ally for enhancing American interests to promote democracy, as they

regarded Israel to be the only democracy in the Middle East (American Enterprise Institute, 2010). Jacksonians similarly developed the view that Israel was an important ally after the Six-Day-War because of the common enemies they had in the Middle East region, against Communism during the Cold War, and later Islamic terrorism. Moreover, it examines the influence of the lessons of Munich on neoconservatives to their approach to Saddam Hussein.

The third section analyses the neoconservatives' Wilsonian democracy promotion rhetorical, and their Jacksonian actions at policy-level to nullify threats and maximise American power as a way to move beyond, as they saw it, defeatist attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, rather than directly address its concerns. Whilst the neoconservatives made references to Wilsonian democracy promotion and freedom, they took a more Jacksonian approach by trying to achieve a definitive victory as a way to move beyond the collective public psychological attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. It will also assess the generational divisions between the older and younger neoconservatives. The older generation from the Cold War were more explicitly Jacksonian, concerned about combatting external threats in the form of the Soviet Union to achieve primacy, and they would use rhetoric around human rights as a vehicle for the main aim of maximising US power The younger and predominantly post-Cold War neoconservatives rhetorically demonstrated more Wilsonian idealism about the global role of the of the United States in promoting democracy as "an indispensable nation" (1997),as Robert Kagan termed it, through increasing the use of military intervention alongside continuing to adhere to Jacksonian policy aims of nullifying new and external threats to US power. Charles Krauthammer warned that "relatively small, peripheral and backward states will be able to emerge rapidly as threats not only to regional, but to world, security. Iraq, which (unless disarmed by Desert Storm) will likely be in possession of intercontinental missiles within the decade, is the prototype of this new strategic threat, what might be called the 'Weapon State'" (1990/91: p.30). Nevertheless, both generations remained fairly frustrated towards public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when approaching military intervention, and saw the best way to approach them, was achieving military success, rather than worrying about pessimistic pre-conditions that could in itself undermine success.

The final section explores how Saddam Hussein became the neoconservatives' post-Cold War enemy after the 1991 Gulf War through the objective of removing him and democratising Iraq to enhance US power and security. It analyses how they interpreted George H.W. Bush's claim that America had "kicked the Vietnam Syndrome" (1991) as the definitive Jacksonian victory that subdued in their view, defeatist sections of the American public that were reluctant to use military intervention, which then gave licence for a Wilsonian ambition to reshape geopolitics in America's foreign policy approach. Furthermore, it explains how 9/11 changed the paradigm in US foreign

policymaking because neoconservatives felt vindicated for criticising the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, arguing that concessions to public opinion had caused America to let its guard down. Instead they saw 9/11 a reminder of the lessons of Munich, and that America needed to attack threats even pre-emptively before they fully materialised. Moreover, neoconservatives and the Bush administration often responded to public opinion by vilifying critics as anti-American, rather than engaging with their concerns. They took a confrontational position by framing foreign policy debate as either being with or against them. The Bush administration largely continued the neoconservative approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome whereby they believed these concerns were fundamentally defeatist and undermined military success. It will analyse how the Bush administration predominantly tried to persuade the American public by employing Jacksonian rhetoric to emphasise the threat that Saddam posed with WMDs and links to terrorism. However, Bush and his administration members also used Wilsonian language by claiming that Iraq would embrace democratic values and attempting to go through the UN to try to win more international and domestic support. The Wilsonian language was also used to placate elements of the attitudes Vietnam Syndrome by indicating that the war would be quick with few fatalities. "Both the pessimism of the threat assessment and the optimism of the post-war assessment helped pave the way for war. by overstating the threat of Iraq, the former made war seem more necessary. By understating the difficulty of remaking Iraq, the latter, made it seem easier and less expensive than it would prove to be" (Ricks, 2006:p.59). Therefore, Bush and the neoconservatives believed that the best way to approach the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome both in the build-up, and its early stages, was by succeeding in their goal in the Iraq War of Jacksonian total victory with Wilsonian democratisation.

Early neoconservative ideas, and its development as a political movement post-Vietnam War

This section examines the early ideas of neoconservatism, and how Wilsonians and Jacksonians united in response to the post-Vietnam War attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to bring neoconservative ideas into US foreign policy debate. "Originally applied to various former leftists who drifted to the strongly anti-communist, pro-Vietnam War wing of the Democratic Party in the 1960s, the term 'neoconservatism' became associated with opposition to détente and to President Jimmy Carter's human rights policy in the 1970s, and with the anti-Sovietism of the Reagan administration" (Dumbrell, 2005:p.40).

Neoconservative ideas predated the Vietnam War and originated from pro-democracy, anti-Stalinist, and anti-totalitarian leftist intellectuals in the 1930s. These included university contemporaries: Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, and Seymour Martin Lipset. Lipset recalled

that they were "anti-Soviet not because of what was going on in the Soviet Union; they were anti-Soviet because of their experiences with American Communists" (1993). These early neoconservative thinkers were also often critical of right-wing anti-Communism, especially McCarthyism, the illiberal crackdown by the Republican, Senator Joseph McCarthy for Wisconsin, who often made unsubstantiated accusations of Americans being Communists (Storrs, 2015). Bell argued in his book, 'The New American Right', that McCarthyism had damaged the fabric of American democratic politics and was counterproductive in combatting Communism (1955). This inspired their early ideas for democracy promotion, criticising left-wing and right-wing suppression. Glazer wrote in Commentary magazine under the editorship of Norman Podhoretz and later joined The Public Interest, which was co-founded in 1965 by Bell and Kristol.

Irving Kristol is considered to be the intellectual godfather of neoconservatism rather than the political one that Henry Jackson is credited as being (Bernstein, 2009). Kristol described neoconservatism as more of a "persuasion" than an ideology that individuals could drift in and out of (1995:p.9). In his later years, Kristol explained in his paper titled, "The Neoconservative Persuasion", for the neoconservative think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute, that neoconservative foreign policy has four main attitudes:

First, patriotism is a natural and healthy sentiment and should be encouraged by both private and public institutions. Precisely because we are a nation of immigrants, this is a powerful American sentiment. Second, world government is a terrible idea since it can lead to world tyranny. International institutions that point to an ultimate world government should be regarded with the deepest suspicion. Third, statesmen should, above all, have the ability to distinguish friends from enemies…Finally, for a great power, the "national interest" is not a geographical term, except for fairly prosaic matters like trade and environmental regulation. A smaller nation might appropriately feel that its national interest begins and ends at its borders, so that its foreign policy is almost always in a defensive mode. A larger nation has more extensive interest (2003).

As the term "neo" suggests, neoconservatives were new conservatives. The Vietnam War became an especially significant fault-line in conservative American politics in foreign policy debate as well as progressive groups within the Democratic Party. Neoconservatives were considered to be new because of their interventionist foreign policy approach driven by Wilsonian liberal internationalism that advocates for democracy promotion and Jacksonian aims of combating threats and enhancing US power. This differed from traditional conservative isolationists and opponents of the New Deal such as Robert A. Taft, the Republican senator for Ohio between 1939-53, and presidential candidate in 1948, and paleoconservatives. Michael Foley explained that

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"paleoconservatives press for restrictions on immigration, a rollback of multicultural programs, and large-scale demographic change, the decentralisation of federal policy, the restoration of controls upon free trade, a greater emphasis on economic nationalism and non-interventionism in a conduct of American foreign policy" (2007:p.318). The Vietnam War created a fault-line between neoconservatives and paleoconservatives.

The latter stages of the Vietnam War became a catalyst for neoconservatism when domestic public opinion became divided over military intervention and America's global role by the 1970s. Velasco observed that "neoconservatives were highly affected by three main events: the Vietnam War, the students' revolt and the growth of the New Left" (2010:p.28). Norman Podhoretz denounced the New Left and the student movement as being comparable to 1930s Stalinism because he believed they tried to impose their views. Podhoretz reflected that they, "constitute a 'new class' that has taken over the universities, and publishing, public service, and cultural industries of the United States" (1987). The strong opposition to the Vietnam War gave domestic public opinion that represented the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome a bigger role in US foreign policy debate in establishing clearer objectives in future intervention.

Neoconservatives' foreign policy approach that developed after the failure of the Vietnam War, centres around American exceptionalism that espouses Wilsonian democracy promotion, and Jacksonian realism to maximise power. Individual neoconservatives often lean more towards one tradition or the other on a spectrum. "Their thought, as far as foreign policy is concerned, was a mixture of anti-communism, democratic optimism, threats-based realism and, perhaps above all, a commitment to American exceptionalism" (Dumbrell, 2008:p.34). Religion has an important role in American exceptionalism through the influence of Manifest Destiny and the belief that America has a divine position to spread its values, which influenced neoconservatives. "A line runs from seventeenth-century Puritan thought, to the Revolution, to the mid-nineteenth-century doctrine of manifest destiny, to late nineteenth-century American imperialism, to Wilsonian idealism, to cold war anticommunism, and finally to George W. Bush's unilateralism. These are manifestations of a common theme. Given its theological source—namely, the belief that God provides a warrant for America's mission" (Ceasar, 2012:p.11). That is not to say that neoconservatives are all religious, but their sense of mission is heavily influenced by religion. Furthermore, this influenced their belief that public opinion, and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome should not impede this mission. Paula Dobriansky, George W. Bush's Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs and member of the neoconservative organisation, the Project for the New American Century that supported removing Saddam, exemplified the importance of American exceptionalism to their foreign policy approach. She wrote that the "United States has a moral imperative to advocate that individuals around the

world have the freedom to pursue their dreams in a secure, prosperous and peaceful environment" (2004). "This sense of mission is based on a particular interpretation of American exceptionalism" (Velasco, 2010:p.185). This approach to American exceptionalism shares ideas with Manifest Destiny and the belief that America has a messianic position to spread its values.

In addition to American exceptionalism influencing neoconservatives' belief that America has a missionary global role, neoconservatives on the Wilsonian end of the spectrum are also influenced by democratic peace theory. Immanuel Kant developed some early ideas of democratic peace theory. He argued that "if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamity of war" (1795). The theory therefore posits that democracy provides a greater say for those likely to be killed in wars (Russet, 1993:p.30). Charles Lipson argued that four factors give democracies a "contracting advantage" that leads to peace: greater transparency, greater continuity, electoral incentives for leaders to keep promises, and constitutional governance (2003).

President Woodrow Wilson, who inspired Wilsonianism, argued that America needed to become involved in the First World War because democracy promotion was fundamental to peace, telling Congress that "a steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations" (1917). Ashley Cox explains that Wilsonianism comprises of two pillars: the first being that "the governments of democratic states are more likely to reflect the will of the people than authoritarian states and are more likely to have a broadly liberal political culture…This will make these states more peaceful and more likely to cooperate with one another" (2021:p.12). Cox then explains that "the second pillar is addressed in the concept that if the United States seeks to live in a peaceful system it should seek to encourage international institutions that will help enforce international law and act as a collective security guarantee to dissuade states from resolving their differences through the use of force" (Ibid)

Cox's first Wilsonian pillar influenced early neoconservative defenders of the Vietnam War, such as Henry Jackson, who originally supported the conflict out of his support for the Wilsonian president, John F. Kennedy (Mead, 2010:p.63). Before being president, Kennedy actively supported South Vietnam out of Wilsonian beliefs, stating that, "Vietnam represents a proving ground of democracy in Asia…the United States is directly responsible for this experiment—it is playing an important role in the laboratory where it is being conducted. We cannot afford to permit that experiment to fail". (1956). Kennedy further emphasised his Wilsonian beliefs in his inaugural address when promising "to oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty" (1961),

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suggesting that this commitment would not depend on US public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Some neoconservative advocates of the Iraq War similarly shared Wilsonian sentiments, such as Richard Perle who asserted that, "most neoconservatives believe that democracy is a good thing…If the world were democratic, it would be a safer place for everyone, because in a democracy it is very difficult for small revolutionaries to move people towards war"(2008:p.185). Moreover, President George W. Bush emphasised his belief in democratic peace theory in his second inaugural address, claiming that "the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world (2005).

However, neoconservatives do not support the second Wilsonian pillar of international institutions. This reflects their Jacksonian tendencies, as they "have the least regard for international law and international institutions" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.18), which stems from their interpretation of American exceptionalism that emphasises American superiority (Restad, 2014). They believe that international institutions are hinderances to maximising power and superiority and they therefore do not want to be bound by global governance. Neoconservatives also argue that institutions do not improve collective security or make the world safer for democracy because they too often empower undemocratic states, and are therefore, illegitimate. "For Jacksonians, the world community Wilsonians want to build is not merely a moral impossibility but a monstrosity" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.18). The Jacksonian influence with elements of Wilsonianism can be seen through neoconservatives' disdain towards multilateralism whereby "in the neoconservative vision, the U.N. is not only ineffective, it is also illegitimate because it is profoundly undemocratic. The U.N. General Assembly gives as much power to Libya as to India, and the Security Council is even more flawed: why should a tyranny (China) and a semi dictatorship (Russia) hold veto power over what the international community does"? (Vaisse, 2010:p.6). As power is paramount to Jacksonians, they regard international institutions and law that could restrict foreign policymaking through vetoes, as potentially constraining its ability to combat threats. Jacksonians also believe that America must be willing to fight "pre-emptive wars" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.18), which is a core neoconservative belief, and they have little concern for international criticism or domestic opposition, such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Neoconservatives have a consistent pattern of ignoring the second Wilsonian pillar by dismissing international institutions and displaying more Jacksonian behaviour by using unilateral military action. For example, in 1983, Reagan ordered a ground troop invasion of the Caribbean nation, Grenada, to oust its Communist regime. The UN General Assembly Resolution 38/7 was overwhelmingly adopted by a vote of 108 to 9, stating that it "deeply deplores the armed intervention in Grenada, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and of the

independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that State" (1983). However, when asked whether large scale and united criticism from the international community concerned him, Reagan jovially replied, "it didn't upset my breakfast at all" (1983). The British prime minister Margert Thatcher, who shared a publicly close ideological friendship with Reagan, was only notified three hours before the invasion of a British Commonwealth country began. In her memoirs, Thatcher recalled her dismay, telling Reagan that, "I cannot conceal that I am deeply disturbed by your latest communication" (1993:p.331). Reagan even claimed that the victory was a turning point for US foreign policy, and a moment when "our military forces are back on their feet and standing tall" (1983). Similarly, the 2003 Iraq War ignored international institutions by not seeking a UN resolution to authorise the intervention, and Bush was not interested in building a large multinational military coalition. This differed for example, from the 1999 Kosovo intervention, which was regarded as "illegal but legitimate" (2000), because although it did not obtain UN authorisation, it had a multilateral NATO coalition.

Jacksonians also opposed leaving Vietnam, but not because they believed that it abandoned democracy promotion. Jacksonians regarded leaving Vietnam as a failure to uphold American honour by surrendering to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. There is an "important implication of Jacksonian sentiment for foreign policy: the significance attached to the protection of national honor and reputation" (Clarke & Ricketts, 2016:p.19). Therefore, "Jacksonian opinion which in the nature of things had little faith that South Vietnam could build democracy or that there was anything concrete there of interest to the average American, was steadfast in support of the war—though not the strategy—because we had given our word to defend South Vietnam" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.21). Far from believing that escalation of the Vietnam War lost public support, thus provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, Jacksonians believed that it "lost public support in part because of political decisions not to risk the consequences of all-out war" (p.6). This subsequently began the forming of an alliance with Wilsonians disillusioned by the Democratic Party to develop the neoconservative movement to fight back against the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

The Vietnam War was therefore a watershed moment for neoconservatism as a political movement. Its support grew amongst moderate Democrats, led by Henry Jackson who had become disaffected by the party's growing anti-Vietnam war stance (1973). These included individuals such as Jeane Kirkpatrick who became Reagan's Ambassador to the United Nations, as well as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz who both served under Reagan and became influential in the George W. Bush administration. They worked closely with Jackson before becoming significant figures in promoting neoconservative ideas for America's foreign policy approach. Their disdain for the anti-Vietnam War movement was the catalyst for these interventionists to transition into becoming conservatives.

In Reagan's 1980 speech to veterans mentioned in chapter one, where he coined the phrase, the 'Vietnam Syndrome', to express his frustration at public hesitance towards military intervention, he captured the combination of Wilsonian and Jacksonian beliefs in neoconservatism. Reagan demonstrated Wilsonian beliefs when he claimed that the Vietnam War was about helping "a small country newly free from colonial rule sought our help in establishing self-rule and the means of self-defense against a totalitarian neighbor" (1980). However, he also conveyed a strong Jacksonian message when saying, "we will never again ask young men to fight and possibly die in a war our government is afraid to let them win" (Ibid). Reagan exemplified Jacksonian characteristics, since winning at almost any cost is paramount to maximising and maintaining American power. His Jacksonian instincts suggested that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were fundamentally defeatist, which made them obstructive to succeeding in future wars by encouraging a distorted view that they would fail, rather than introspection.

Therefore, after the Vietnam War, Reagan led the neoconservatives, comprised of Wilsonians and Jacksonians in response to the more Jeffersonian attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that advocated for restraint under Jimmy Carter. Neoconservatives' reference to the American public's memory of Vietnam and its caution towards military intervention as a syndrome was telling in itself. It suggests that questioning America's militaristic foreign policy approach and how true it stays to its perceived moral values is the illness itself rather than an important indication that debate is needed. Reagan became a figurehead for many Americans disgruntled by US foreign policy critics whose views he criticised as being part of the Vietnam Syndrome. He demonised this section of public opinion as anti-American as Governor, rather than appreciate the concern for evaluating a rationale for military intervention and having an exit strategy. "In Reagan as presidential candidate, conservatives had a gifted communicator who appealed to a more militant strand of American nationalism, unapologetic about the use of American power, and deeply resentful of liberal criticism of America and its role in the world" (MacMillan, 2019:p.594). The Jacksonian tradition is "stronger among the mass of ordinary people than it is among the elite. It is more strongly entrenched in the heartland than on either of the two coasts" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.17). This was mirrored by the divisions surrounding the Vietnam War, with coastal liberal Jeffersonians leading the anti-war movement, whilst Middle America Jacksonians broadly remained supportive, alongside some Wilsonians.

Furthermore, Reagan also appealed to Wilsonians who believed that America is a symbol of freedom and democracy. Not only did Reagan dismiss the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, he "attempted to undo Vietnam's damage to the exceptionalism myth…Reagan's speeches recapture all the ebullient optimism of the Founding Fathers and messianic idealism of Wilson"(Davis & Lynn-

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Jones, 1987:p.28). Consequently, Reagan and the neoconservatives tried to change the memory of Vietnam and look back at it with pride instead of it being wrong. This was most notable when Reagan awarded the Vietnam veteran Roy Benavidez the Congressional Medal of Honor to frame the war in more celebratory terms. In his address presenting the award, Reagan said "it's time to show our pride" for those who fought (1981).

The approach that combined Wilsonian democracy promotion and morality with Jacksonian nationalism and sensitivity towards threats to US power influenced George W. Bush and the neoconservative advocates of the Iraq War in managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Bush and the neoconservatives believed that this image eclipsed the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome during the War on Terror because they dogmatically believed in the righteousness of their foreign policy approach and America's military power to implement democracy in Iraq. Perhaps, as a religious man himself, Bush was particularly impressionable to neoconservative foreign policy ideas such as America having a missionary approach of proactively spreading its perceived values globally. Nonetheless, neoconservative foreign policymakers used Bush's inexperience and lack of knowledge about international affairs to influence him. Perle recalled that Bush "didn't know very much…He was eager to learn…You got the sense that if he believed something, he'd pursue (it) tenaciously" (2003). Wolfowitz went as far to describe Bush as "the new Scoop Jackson" (Ibid). Bush's 2002 West Point speech explicitly embraced the ideas that America has a higher purpose to promote its values globally, stating that: "Our nation's cause has always been larger than our nation's defence. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favours human liberty. We will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent" (2002).

During his 2003 State of the Union address, Bush was explicit about his Manichean worldview and belief in America's supposedly divine uniqueness and its moral force for good in the world. With America to invade Iraq only two months later, Bush stated that, "the liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity" (2003). Bush demonstrated, like neoconservatives before him, the belief that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and concerns about military intervention should not undermine America's power and moral duty to make the world a more democratic and safer place that it sits atop of. These principles to the neoconservatives' foreign policy approach can be attributed to the alliance formed between Wilsonians and Jacksonians post-Vietnam in response to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

The impact of the "Lessons of Munich" on the neoconservatives' interpretation of the Vietnam Syndrome and their view of the Middle East

This section discusses how neoconservatives' worldview amongst Wilsonians and Jacksonians, was heavily influenced by totalitarian Nazism and the Holocaust when responding to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, neoconservatives were affected by the Israeli-Arab 1967 Six-Day-War based on Wilsonian support for the only democracy in the Middle East, and Jacksonian respect for honour in protecting its people in a hostile world, as well as sharing common enemies. As mentioned in chapter one, analogies have been commonly used (and misused), in US foreign policy discourse to support a position on whether to militarily intervene overseas. Those who encouraged American military intervention often evoked the "lessons of Munich" (McCrisken, 2006:p.160). This refers to when the world did not stand up to Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany, resulting in the atrocities of World War Two and the Holocaust. Americans that have been more cautious towards intervention often remind people of the "lessons of Vietnam" (Ibid), and the need to avoid protracted wars that the military cannot exit.

Neoconservatives argued that America should focus on the lessons of Munich to prevent the catastrophic events that followed it from being repeated. They are not the first politicians or thinkers to do this to justify American wars. Harry S. Truman referenced Munich in an address to the American public a year into the Korean War to reaffirm its importance. He stated that, "the world learned from Munich that security cannot be bought by appeasement" (1950). The analogy was later used by Lyndon B. Johnson when he increased military action during the Vietnam War, stressing that, "we learned from Hitler and Munich that success only feeds the appetite for aggression" (1965). The Munich analogy has clearly been used frequently. It is easy therefore to read these warnings as clichés which leaders use to rally support because there is consensus that another dictator like Hitler would be bad. It is easy therefore to read these warnings as clichés which leaders use to rally support because of the naturally strong feelings that the memories of Hitler's atrocities provoke, and the consensus that another dictator anything like as bad as him would bring dire global consequences.

Neoconservatives, however, saw the "lessons of Munich" as more significant than a warning to stand up to a dictator to justify warfare, though Jacksonians adopted the more orthodox view of it. They argued that America should not only intervene when crises similar to the Holocaust or atrocities happen, it should intervene because it is the only country with the power and virtuousness that can prevent them from happening, and stop them if they occur. This reflected the neoconservatives' partial adherence to Wilsonianism, whereby "the Wilsonian School makes the argument that non-democratic states are by their nature expansionist and aggressive but that a

strong international response can deter this aggression" (Cox, 2021:p.108). Neoconservatives see the United States as having an "historic responsibility" to "maintain unrivalled power and use it to spread freedom and democracy" (Patman, 2007:p.971-72) For neoconservatives therefore, this responsibility overrides any circumspective voices towards intervention such as attitudes that are part of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Henry Jackson was particularly affected by the Holocaust. He had been reluctant about American involvement in World War Two, and as a member of the House of Representatives from Washington's Second District, he voted against the 1941 Lend-Lease policy to supply Allied nations with food and weaponry, which nonetheless passed (Kaufmann, 2000:p34). It was the first significant step by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to move away from non-interventionism and neutrality. When America formally entered the war, Jackson briefly joined the Army, but returned home when Roosevelt ordered serving Congressmen to do so or vacate their seats. When the war ended Jackson was profoundly affected by his visit to the remains of the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, days after it had been liberated by Allied forces led by Dwight D. Eisenhower. 56,545 inmates died in Buchenwald through harsh labour, malnourishment and disease, and the camp became notorious for human experimentation (Lifton, 1986). The consequences of the Holocaust that Jackson witnessed, was therefore crucial to the change in his politics. He said that he left Buchenwald, "completely convinced that the Nazis were engaged in the systematic destruction of peoples who opposed their form of government and all peoples who they believed belonged to so-called inferior races. I thought of how easily it could have happened to us if their program of world conquest reached our shores" (Kaufman, 2000:p.39). Thereafter, Jackson pushed for higher defence spending and a US foreign policy approach that committed to fighting international totalitarianism and defending human rights in the national interest.

Neoconservatives were therefore moved by the Holocaust because they believed that dictators had to be confronted by force if necessary, and that the atrocities happened because America failed to live up to its exceptional virtues quickly enough. Daniel Bell recalled that "Stalinism and the Holocaust had been 'traumatic' experiences that affected his generation"(1991). Norman Podhoretz and Jeane Kirkpatrick were especially influenced by Hannah Arendt's 'The Origins of Totalitarianism' (1951), a text that analyses Nazism and Stalinism. Arendt wrote that "totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within"(p.325). Podhoretz acknowledged that "he was overly influenced by Hannah Arendt and other theorists of totalitarianism" (1990). Kirkpatrick recalled that she "read 'The Origins of Totalitarianism' as soon as it came out" (1998). Neoconservatives also evoked Munich in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. When Reagan challenged President Gerald Ford in 1976 Republican primaries, he condemned the

withdrawal as comparable to surrendering to Nazism. "He predicted that a lack of American will to save South Vietnam would 'tempt the Soviet Union as it once tempted Hitler and the military rulers of Japan'"(Perlstein, 2014:p.432). This was probably a more clichéd usage, but the more important point is that the Holocaust shaped neoconservatives' views that made them believe that there is almost perpetual war between good and evil. Indeed this begins to explain George W. Bush's rhetoric when he adopted a neoconservative foreign policy approach. He portrayed the War on Terror as a new phase in the long fight between good and evil. Bush told Congress shortly after the 9/11 attacks, the terrorists "follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism" (2001) and that "Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen" (Ibid). This reflects that neoconservatives believed that the most important event that should guide America's foreign policy approach was the lessons of Munich.

The Holocaust especially influenced neoconservatives who went on to serve the George W. Bush administration:

Wolfowitz grew up in a household in which Hitler and Stalin were not abstractions. His father, a mathematics professor at Cornell and an innovator in the field of statistics, was a Polish Jew who emigrated from Russian-held Warsaw in 1920. He often told his children how lucky they were to have escaped the totalitarian horrors of Europe for the benign security of America. There were many Wolfowitzes consumed in the Holocaust, and according to Wolfowitz's sister, Laura, the world's perils and America's moral responsibility were constant topics at their dinner table (Keller, 2002).

Similarly, "for Feith, as for Wolfowitz–and the Holocaust–and mistakes the West made appeasing Hitler in the 1930s, rather than stopping him–became a keystone in thinking about policy" (Ricks, 2006:p.77). In an interview with the New Yorker, Feith made these views clear and that they developed through his personal experience, saying that "my family got wiped out by Hitler, and that all this stuff about working things out—well, talking to Hitler to resolve the problem didn't make any sense to me" (2005). Feith displayed Wilsonian views by emphasising the importance of preventing the atrocities that the Munich agreement paved way for by failing to stand up to dictators, and highlighted that "like Neville Chamberlain, he said, Baldwin did not understand the nature of the Nazi enemy" (Ibid). Furthermore, Feith demonstrated his Jacksonian beliefs that such threats to US power and its physical security can only be defeated with overwhelming military force. He directly addressed anti-war movements amongst the American public and stated, "the kind of people who put bumper stickers on their car that declare that 'war is not the answer,' are they making a serious comment? What's the answer to Pearl Harbor? What's the answer to the Holocaust" (Ibid)?

Richard Perle, who was another key proponent of the Iraq War, explained how the Holocaust similarly convinced him that America should have an interventionist foreign policy approach. Shortly after the Iraq War began, he stated that:

For those of us who are involved in foreign and defence policy today, my generation, the defining moment of our history was certainly the Holocaust. It was the destruction, the genocide of a whole people, and it was the failure to respond in a timely fashion to a threat that was clearly gathering. We don't want that to happen again. When we have the ability to stop totalitarian regimes we should do so. (BBC, 2003)

Neoconservatives' militaristic approach towards totalitarianism is not solely influenced by Wilsonian optimism to democratise these regimes, but Jacksonian sensitivity to threats to US power. Jacksonians are less concerned about whether totalitarian regimes can democratise, and are often pessimistic about those prospects, but they do believe that the only way to counter them is through strength. This links back to the Jacksonian principle of honour, which "is not simply what one feels oneself to be on the inside; it is also a question of the respect and dignity one commands in the world at large. Jacksonian opinion is sympathetic to the idea that our reputation—whether for fair dealing or cheating, toughness, or weakness—will shape the way others treat us" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.15). This influenced neoconservative foreign policy ideas because they believed if America has the power to nullify threats, such as Nazism and Imperial Japan, it should use it with all its instruments at its disposal, rather than because of moralistic Wilsonian arguments. Jacksonians are instead particularly vengeful, and "it was not the atrocities committed by the Central Powers, the Nazis, or the Japanese army, but the sinking of American shipping (for example, the Lusitania) and the attack on Pearl Harbor that rallied Jacksonian sentiment to the side of Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt" (Clarke & Ricketts, 2016:p.19). Jacksonians therefore adopted the more orthodox "lessons of Munich" view, through believing that these attacks were only possible because America failed to stand up to threats, and what was to them, the collateral damage of the Holocaust could have been prevented.

The lessons of Munich influenced the neoconservatives' interest in the Middle East as a region during and after the 1967 Six-Day-War. Wilsonians and Jacksonians feared that the Jewish people would experience a similar tragedy to the Holocaust, and that the United States should not respond slowly as it did in World War Two. More Wilsonian neoconservatives' support for Israel grew largely through their approach to democracy promotion and democratic peace theory. It was their perception that Israel was of strategic importance as a democratic state in an undemocratic region.

Nevertheless, this needs further explanation as there are misconceptions about US-Israeli relations as well as the amount of influence Israel has on America's foreign policy approach.

The history of American-Israeli relations is complex, and it is simplistic to claim that it has historically involved nearly constant unconditional support between the two nations, particularly because of pressure from the American Diaspora. This perspective of American foreign policy towards Israel is argued in John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's 'The Israel Lobby' (2006). They posited that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and Christian Zionists disproportionately influence US foreign policy towards the Middle East to favour Israel. They claimed that "no lobby has managed to divert it as far from what the national interest would suggest, while simultaneously convincing Americans that US interests and those of the other country—In this case, Israel—are essentially identical" (Ibid).

However, there is a lack of evidence to show that lobbies are the definitive cause of favourable policy outcomes for Israel that proves a disproportionate influence. "There is no such analysis in the book, however—no discussion of the relationship of the argument with other theories and no systematic testing of Mearsheimer and Walt's models of American politics and policymaking against alternatives" (Lieberman, 2009:p.241). Additionally, their definition of the lobby is broad and includes people with different political views. Mead argued that "Mearsheimer and Walt have come up with a definition of "the Israel Lobby" that covers the waterfront, including everyone from Jimmy Carter and George Soros to Paul Wolfowitz and Tom DeLay" (2007:p.163). Therefore, their measurement of the lobby's influence is problematic. The above individuals have different politics but by putting them together, they can reach the flawed conclusion that 'the lobby' is influential because one of them achieves their policy preferences even if it opposes others in the same list. US-Israeli relations is more complex, and American engagement in the Middle East is not primarily driven by small domestic groups.

Mead provides a better analysis of the history of American-Israeli relations, stating that:

The 1948 war of independence in Israel was not won with American arms, as we did not send them any arms. Their source was the Soviet Union, which sent them arms through Czechoslovakia. In the Suez War of 1956, the US actually sided with Egypt against Britain, France and Israel. Not only that, the Israelis fought that war with British and French arms. The Israelis won the Six-Day-War of 1967 with French weapons. Those were French Mirage jets that destroyed the Arab air forces in the opening minutes of that war. The U.S, at that time, was not a significant arms supplier and the US government was not even a significant source of aid to Israel.

The US began to support Israel in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the reason for that largely being that the Soviets had become more prominent as the suppliers of the Syrians and the Egyptians. So for the US, this was an absolutely conventional Cold War decision, like many other Cold War decisions that were made (2002:p.21).

Therefore, America's foreign policy approach towards Israel has been consistently rooted in enhancing its own interests, not political pressure. Moreover, Israel only began to become strategically important particularly to neoconservatives after the Six-Day-War, and to America more generally as Mead noted, during the Yom Kippur War. It is therefore the perceived national interests primarily drives US foreign policy towards Israel.

Nevertheless, the Six-Day-War had a profound political effect on neoconservatives. In the war's prelude, Egypt blockaded the Straits of Tiran which President Johnson called "illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace" (1967), leading to pre-emptive Israeli strikes (Oren, 2002: p.196). Consequently, Israel's neighbouring Arab states: Egypt, Syria, and Jordan invaded. The Egyptian leader Gamal Adbel Nassar made the war's purpose clear, stating that "our basic objective will be to destroy Israel" (1967). During the three week period before the Egyptian army reached the Israeli border, a palpable fear of a second Holocaust grew amongst Jewish-Israelis and the Diaspora. In Israel, rumours of coming disasters were endlessly repeated; frightened men and women raided food shops, buying up the entire stock, despite government announcements that there were ample reserves; thousands of graves were dug in military cemeteries. Israel's political and military leaders lived on the edge of nervous exhaustion (Luttwak & Horowitz, 1975:p.224). The former Israeli minister Dan Meridor, who was interviewed for this research, was a soldier who fought in the war confirmed this. He recalled that:

I remember that I thought everybody was hysterical but maybe it was just the stupidity of my age. When I look back now at the postcards my mother wrote to me and other people, and in the press when I was there, definitely there was a feeling that the very existence of Israel was threatened (2021).

The war terrified the Western Diaspora and fomented a newfound connection to Israel. Many Jewish-Americans who were haunted by their failure to act during the Holocaust felt compelled to mobilise, particularly since it was in living memory for many considering World War Two ended 22 years earlier (Sale, 2017). On June 7, 1967, approximately 50,000 Jews from across America held a rally, organised by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations outside the White House. They voiced their support for Israel and urged Johnson to help end the conflict (1967). Podhoretz, Bell, Kristol, Glazer and Lipset signed a petition with the

group, Americans for Democracy in the Middle East in the New York Times on June 7. It told Johnson not to "let Israel perish" and "act to assure its survival and to secure legality, morality and peace in the area" (1967).

When Israel won the war against expectations, "the victory functioned as total Holocaust negation" (Omer-Jackaman, 2017:p.164). Not all of the Diaspora however celebrate the war's resulting occupation and controversial Israeli-Jewish settlements being built illegally under international law (Roberts, 1990). This attracted criticism from some Jewish-Americans. The senator for Vermont, Bernie Sanders, has said that the "occupation must end" (2017). Furthermore, not all Jewish-Americans, including those affected by the Holocaust, believed that America should proactively try to prevent another Munich moment and its consequences.

Notably, this included the former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who fled Nazi Germany. He subscribed to realpolitik and maintaining the balance of power. Kissinger argued in his book, 'A World Restored', that "moral claims involve quests for absolutes, a denial of nuance, a rejection of history" (1973:p.316). Kissinger criticised Wilsonianism, "as a struggle between good and evil, in each phase of which it is America's mission to help defeat the evil foes challenging a peaceful order...Wilsonianism rejects peace through the balance of power in favour of peace through moral consensus" (1999:p.97). For neoconservatives, as Kissinger suggests, Wilsonian ideals of promoting democracy, and the missionary sense that America should prevent atrocities by learning what came after Munich, made the Six-Day-War, and consequently Israel's security, significant to them. Therefore, domestic public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were secondary to neoconservatives' belief that America had a moral duty to learn from Munich through proactively supporting democracies. This included using military intervention to promote democracy and prevent similar atrocities after Munich from being repeated.

The Six-Day-War significantly influenced Wilsonian and Jacksonian foreign policy beliefs, that became an important part of neoconservative thinking, even if certain individuals in the groups were closer to one school or the other. Elizabeth Stephens argued that the Six-Day-War's "significance for US-Israeli relations lies in total victory of a state that was increasingly perceived to embody American values. The war was quick and decisive, and the television coverage of the 'heroic' Jewish nation won the hearts and minds of large sectors of the American public and provided a sharp contrast to the televised images of burned limbs of the Vietnamese peasants created by US imbroglio in South East Asia" (2010:p.131). This particularly shaped neoconservative views closer to Wilsonian values who regard Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East.

Concurrently, "Israel's triumph in the Six-Day-War while the United States was struggling in the quagmires of Vietnam first drew the attention of Jacksonian America to the Jewish state" (Mead, 2022). However, "where Wilsonians look for common values in choosing allies, Jacksonians look for allies with similar interests, and by interests Jacksonians mean primarily enemies. Believing as they do that fear is the most important factor in international relations, Jacksonians look for allies who can help the United States overcome the enemies it fears" (Ibid). Jacksonians supported Israel out of recognising a similar worldview of being sensitive to threats. Israel's aggressive response in the Six-Day-War resonated with Jacksonians by protecting their people at any cost against those that they regarded as common enemies. "The United States and Israel share so many enemies that anti-US signs can often be found at anti-Israel rallies and that those most prominently associated with the cry of 'Death to America!' will often also be found shouting 'Death to Israel!'" (Ibid). During the Cold War, America regarded Arab states as possible Soviet allies, and during the War on Terror, they suspected that many of them harboured Islamic terrorists that share a hatred for America and Israel.

Perle and Feith exemplified their belief in Israel's strategic importance as a democracy in an undemocratic region in their co-authored the "Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" document with other neoconservatives for the then new Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, from the right-wing Likud party, who incidentally, rejected its ideas. It advocated for "removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq—an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right" and working as a partner to promote "Western values" (1996). Meyrav Wurmser, who also co-authored the document, explained that neoconservatives "are Americans first and foremost, and view themselves as American thinkers, and as people who are most interested in American policy. We see a tremendous similarity between Israel and America, and Britain for that matter, simply because these are leading democracies. In the case of Israel, it's the only democracy in the Middle East" (BBC, 2003). Wurmser reflected the neoconservative Wilsonian belief in democratic peace theory, arguing that relations between America and Israel are peaceful because they are democracies. This exemplified the Wilsonianism that neoconservatives associate with its foreign policy approach. Nevertheless, Wilsonianism is also not purely idealistic because it is also tied to enhancing America's "national security by encouraging likeminded democratic states to come into existence throughout the world" (Smith, 2012:p.8). This view that Israel's security was part of the neoconservatives' rationale for the Iraq invasion has been supported by John Dumbrell. He posited that strong supporters of the invasion aimed to "promote—at least in the long-term—the security of Israel" (2008:p.35). Moreover, neoconservatives prioritised democracy promotion in a region that they regarded to be of strategic interest over concerns amongst American public opinion, reflecting the Jacksonian realist factors in their support too.

However, Israel's democratic character has also been questioned, as Freedom House certifies Israel as a democracy but adds that "the political leadership and many in society have discriminated against Arab and other ethnic or religious minority populations, resulting in systemic disparities in areas including political representation" (2021). Critics of Israel have contested its democratic character due to its treatment of Palestinians. Shibley Telhami argued that "there has always, since 1948, been a concession to Jewishness over democracy—by allowing Jews around the world to become Israeli citizens while denying others the same right" (2020). Moreover, neoconservative proponents of the 2003 Iraq War and reshaping Middle Eastern politics did not represent all American pro-Israel views. Notably, during the build-up to the 2003 Iraq War, the pro-Israel think-tank, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, expressed concerns. The deputy director Patrick Clawson, warned that, "it is overly simplistic to think that we can take a country that has emerged from under a totalitarian regime with its institutions of civil society and create a beacon of democracy within five years" (Ricks, 2006:p.65).

Nevertheless, neoconservatives' interpretation of the lessons of Munich encouraged a combination of Wilsonian and Jacksonian foreign policy principles. More Wilsonian neoconservatives believed America was a global leader in democracy promotion, and its virtues could transform totalitarian regimes into democracies amongst those with more Wilsonian views. The Jacksonian strand believed that they taught that threats should be defeated to maintain primacy. Neoconservatives demonstrated the centrality of the lessons of Munich in their worldview by using World War Two terminology as well as clear references warning about another Holocaust during the Iraq War. For example, Bush warned about an "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union Address, unsubtly evoking the fascist Axis Powers when grouping Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Moreover, Perle and David Frum, the latter Bush's speechwriter credited with the axis of evil term, defended the Iraq War by continuing to use the memory of the consequences from not learning the lessons of Munich. They also used Manichean language, warning that "there is no middle way for Americans: it is victory or Holocaust" (2004:p.48), with little indication that they felt the need to justify their position to the public or acknowledge the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Overall, the lessons from Munich meant more to neoconservatives than just standing up to tyrants. They saw it as a warning to prevent its resulting catastrophe, especially for America and what can happen when it does not use, as they saw it, its unique moral and position to prevent it. The Six-Day-War solidified the Wilsonian belief that democracies need promotion and security in hostile undemocratic regions to avoid such atrocities, and the Jacksonian principle that America should work with states that have common threats. The consequences of the Holocaust therefore also influenced the neoconservatives' worldview and thinking towards the Iraq War and Saddam Hussein. They

believed that undemocratic regimes are inherently threats to global stability and America, and if left undeterred, they can risk atrocities happening on a similar scale. Neoconservatives saw this to be in America's and the world's interest more than listening to the domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Wilsonian rhetorically and Jacksonian at policy-level, with hostility towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome

This section examines the neoconservatives' mixture of appearing to be Wilsonian through their idealistic democracy promotion rhetoric, but behaving as Jacksonians at policy-level. The neoconservatives' foreign policy approach demonstrated its Jacksonian elements by their concern about threats to American power to achieve primacy by their preference for using unilateral military action and ignoring international institutions and laws, which Wilsonians support. Rather than constructively engaging with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by considering its calls for more careful consideration of the conditions for using military intervention to promote US ideals, the neoconservatives rhetorically used Wilsonian idealism, and pursued a more Jacksonian definitive victory at policy-level to dismiss them. Consequently, both generations of neoconservatives, as well as those on Jacksonian and Wilsonian traditions, were equally less concerned about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome themselves. They regarded the attitudes towards military intervention as defeatist that undermined their respective aims of destroying threats to maximise power, and promoting democracy. A generational split also developed between the Cold War neoconservatives that were more interested in power, and the post-Cold War younger group rhetorically encouraged more Wilsonian ideals of America using its "unipolar moment" (Krauthammer, 1991) as an unrivalled superpower to spread democracy. Furthermore, the sincerity of neoconservatives' idealism and commitment to human rights and democracy promotion was questionable. Both generations used their perception of the national interest and moral arguments interchangeably.

Neoconservatives frequently saw the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as something to overcome or 'cure', and they cited the national interest for power maximisation and moral imperatives to justify using military intervention. For example, Reagan defended the Grenada intervention in 1983, he used moral arguments, claiming that "this was no invasion, this is a rescue mission" (1983). Indeed, when the intervention was a success, Reagan portrayed it as the victory that turned a new page on America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention that could move past the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. On December 13, 1983, he stated that "our days of weakness are over. Our military forces are back on their feet and standing tall" (1983). Norman Sandler noted that, "Reagan, who blamed Congress for the outcome in Vietnam and in 1978 called

the conflict 'a long, bloody war which our government refused to win', contends his arms buildup, invasion of Grenada and dispatch of U.S. forces to world trouble spots signalled the end of 'the Vietnam Syndrome.'" (1984). However, Reagan later acknowledged the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the public concerns about military intervention through the creation of the Weinberger Doctrine as previously mentioned in chapter one.

Nevertheless, in practice, neoconservatives in the Reagan Administration often took the approach that that the best way to address the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was by achieving a Jacksonian definitive victory over the main threat, in this case, Communism. Neoconservative ideas such as those advocated for in Kirkpatrick's, 'Dictatorships and Double Standards' (1979), influenced Reagan's foreign policy approach to support anti-Communist contras to maximise American power rather display moral leadership (despite her own claims). In the piece, Kirkpatrick argued that "although there is no instance of a revolutionary 'socialist' or Communist society being democratized, right-wing autocracies do sometimes evolve into democracies" (Ibid). Kirkpatrick exemplified the neoconservative hostility to centralised totalitarian dictatorships that can be seen in communist regimes. However, Kirkpatrick also epitomised the view that democracy promotion is therefore not always the neoconservatives' essential end (albeit preferable) goal, as advancing US interests and maximising power was more important.

Kirkpatrick demonstrated how neoconservatives can strongly associate democracies being attached to US interests, rather than their true democratic character, particularly if an elected government is leftist and anti-American. Dan Plesch highlighted the neoconservatives' inconsistency towards democracy promotion when a socialist Salvador Allend was elected and the US under Nixon "intervened against 'unfriendly' democrats, as for example in Chile" in 1973 (2005:p.52). Plesch explained that the intervention demonstrated their broader worldview that "the idea of friendship in this context is not easily compatible with the hard-headed realism on which neoconservatives pride themselves (no permanent friends only permanent interest)" (Ibid). This showed how neoconservatives often prioritise a more Jacksonian foreign policy approach of advancing US power and interests over their rhetorical Wilsonian idealism of democracy promotion.

Kirkpatrick also received criticism from the non-interventionist right such as the Cato Institute's Ted Galen Carpenter, who argued that "right-wing autocratic movements pose the more lethal threat to functioning democracies" (1985). Therefore, as Plesch notes, "perhaps it is consonant with 'democratic realism propounded by Charles Krauthammer" (2005:p.52). This refers to Krauthammer's description of neoconservatism being closer to democratic globalism, or realism, in which he explicitly acknowledged that "democratic globalism is not Wilsonian" (2004:p.15). Instead

Krauthammer also argued that neoconservatism is driven more by power and self-interest, rather than idealism, "whereby "the spread of democracy is not just an end but a means, an indispensable means for securing American interests" (Ibid). Therefore, neoconservatives' more Jacksonian emphasis on interests of power rather than Wilsonian idealism that regards democracy promotion as a universal benefit is a more appropriate way to describe neoconservative democracy promotion. Moreover, neoconservatives believed that achieving its aims and ends at almost any cost was the most effective way to approach the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome because such sentiments arose because of foreign policy failure.

For instance, neoconservatives disregarded the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when they aided contras, and the opposition that followed. Their Jacksonian approach prioritised successful outcomes by defeating threats to US power. They took this view that this approach was more effective than conducting foreign policy by listening to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The neoconservatives responded to public criticism with a mix of antagonistic jingoism and claims of moral righteousness. Kirkpatrick lampooned critics as those who "blame America first" (1984). Instead of using force, or sending military aid, 52% of Americans wanted to use economic sanctions (Harris, 1985) and 46% preferred an embargo (Gallup, 1985). Although Reagan argued that supporting the Nicaraguan contras had Wilsonian moral motives by calling them the "moral equal of our Founding Fathers"(1985), it was widely accepted that the contras did not particularly share values of human rights or democracy and that they committed human rights abuses (Kinzer, 1986).

Public opposition to aiding contras and its distrust of the Government grew when the Iran-Contras affair materialised with 70% disapproving (Sobel, 1989:p.117). Furthermore, whilst American support for anti-Communist groups helped defeat the Soviet Union, the broader structural differences in the economic and political capabilities between the two superpowers were more significant than proxy wars. "Gorbachev may have had numerous reasons for seeking to withdraw from the rivalry with the United States, but a necessary precondition was the perception of *reduced capability* to continue competing"(Wohlforth, 1995:p.96). Nevertheless, the neoconservatives were willing to challenge more dovish attitudes such as the Vietnam Syndrome by suggesting that their fundamentally defeatist foreign policy approach needed to be answered with success, not by placating such view. The neoconservatives' Jacksonian approach towards foreign policy and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, often therefore prioritised power, and victory over rivals above all else. Consequently, the position of Cold War neoconservatives were closer to Jacksonian realists pursuing primacy, and marginalising public opinion. Moreover, the neoconservatives felt somewhat vindicated about their approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when the collapse of Soviet Communism shortly after Reagan's presidency.

Post-Cold War neoconservatives were more overtly Wilsonian, both rhetorically and as a policy aspiration in their promotion of liberal democracy and freedom, but they still advocated for Jacksonian principles. The Wilsonian idealism amongst the younger neoconservatives was epitomised in a co-authored article by Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol (Irving's son). Kagan worked in the State Department in the Reagan administration, and Kristol, was the Chief of Staff for Dan Quayle, George H.W. Bush's vice president. With the lack of an ideological rival after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Communism worldwide, they argued that this was the time for the United States to exercise its moral leadership, "by actively promoting American principles of governance abroad-democracy, free markets, respect for liberty" (p.22).

Nevertheless, Kristol and Kagan demonstrated Jacksonian beliefs by searching for external threats to US power and the Jacksonian "folk community" which particularly refers to Americans of Christian and European backgrounds, as well as those without a strong identification with a specific country other than the United Sates (Mead, 2001:p.226). For Jacksonians, "outside that compact is chaos and darkness" (Mead, 2000:p.14). Kristol and Kagan demonstrated their Jacksonian instincts with their concern that US vigilance was eroding post-Cold War due to "the lack of a visible threat to US vital interests or world peace has tempted Americans to absentmindedly dismantle the material and spiritual foundation on which their national well-being has been based" (1996:p.22). Samuel Huntington similarly posited that, "the United States, perhaps more than most countries may need an opposing other to maintain its unity" (1997).

This was not true of America as a whole, as Clinton promised to "focus on the economy like a laser beam" (1992) and domestic issues became a bigger priority post-Cold War. This reflected US public attitudes too, with 75% saying affordable healthcare needed to be a higher priority according to the Pew Research Center (1998). Huntington's claim, therefore, more accurately described younger neoconservatives such as Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol. The latter two bemoaned that conservatives and America succumbed "to the admonition of John Quincy Adams that America ought not to go 'abroad in search of monsters to destroy'. But why not"? (1996:p.31). These younger neoconservatives believed therefore, that America needed to continue to readily use military intervention to remain vigilant to threats and proactively promote democracy, which also contrasted with early neoconservative thinkers.

Irving Kristol for example, believed that the United States needed to consolidate its position as the sole superpower with more restraint, rather than proactively promote democracy, arguing towards the end of the Cold War that "I am not one of those who is thrilled by the success of democracy in Argentina, or in the Philippines, or imminently, in Korea. Democracy will not survive in

those countries" (1987:p.25). Similarly, Nathan Glazer opposed proactively searching for threats, arguing that the United States should avoid being the "policeman of the world" (1990), and instead behave as an exemplar in its foreign policy approach by "making democracy and free economy attractive" (Ibid), stating that "our example has played a larger role. And this is all the Founding Fathers intended" (Ibid). The younger neoconservatives Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol however, criticised foreign policymakers for allowing, as they saw, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to continue influencing America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention post-Cold War:

The Democrats are still recovering from their post-Vietnam trauma of two decades ago. President Clinton has proved a better manager of foreign policy than many expected, but he has not been up to the larger task of preparing and inspiring the nation to embrace the role of global leadership. He, too, has tailored his internationalist activism to fit the constraints of a popular mood that White House pollsters believe is disinclined to sacrifice blood and treasure in the name of overseas commitment (1996:p.31).

During the 1990s, Bill Clinton and the Democrats by contrast to the neoconservatives, adopted a more liberal interventionist approach that preferred multilateral and public support. "For the most part the liberal left tended to stress that force should be used as a last resort; the importance of multilateral authorisation as a check against states acting as judge and jury in their own right; and that the use of force should credibly, in the eyes of (at least democratic) public opinion, serve some higher good" (MacMillan, 2004). Liberals such as Clinton were more conscious of public opinion towards military intervention throughout much of the Bosnia War and the wider conflicts in the Balkans such as Kosovo from 1998 until 1999. American public opinion was not supportive of the Bosnia intervention, as only 21% favoured using ground troops, compared with 73% opposed in 1995 (CBS). Richard Sobel believed that "polling on Bosnia reveals that the 'post-Vietnam Syndrome' was still apparent in the preference of most Americans to stay out of foreign entanglements" (1998:p.251). Similarly, only 46% supported participating in NATO's Kosovo intervention a week before it commenced (Gallup, 1999). Kagan, Kristol, and neoconservatives more generally, regarded liberal concerns about the domestic public preferences for multilateralism and anxieties military interventions becoming quagmires as futile.

Additionally, despite the neoconservatives' more Wilsonian rhetoric post-Cold War, their policy goals resembled Jacksonian beliefs that above all, prioritised American primacy over idealistic democracy promotion, exemplified by the 1992 Wolfowitz Doctrine. Wolfowitz was more idealistic about democracy promotion than other neoconservatives, having been amongst the staunchest proponents of the 2003 Iraq War to spread democracy. Nevertheless, the original leaked Wolfowitz

Doctrine document, which was the initial version of the Defense Planning Guidance for the 1994–1999 fiscal years, advocated for a more Jacksonian foreign policy approach of maximising American power and pre-eminence and destroying threats before they could materialise, similarly to Kagan and Kristol's worldview. Wolfowitz argued that "our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival...the U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture" (Tyrell,1992). It was not until the public backlash it provoked, (Ibid), that the language in the document was modified by the then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell to make it appear more Wilsonian. Cheney with the help of his deputy undersecretary of defense, Scooter Libby, emphasised Wilsonian themes, saying, "if we and other leading democracies continue to build a democratic security community, a much safer world is likely to emerge" (1992). Furthermore, Wolfowitz encouraged using unilateral and preventative intervention, saying, "while the United States cannot become the world's policeman and assume responsibility for solving every international security problem, neither can we allow our critical interests to depend solely on international mechanisms that can be blocked by countries whose interests may be very different than our own" (1992). Wolfowitz therefore reflected a more Jacksonian interpretation of American exceptionalism that advocated for enhancing US power, attaining superiority, and nullifying threats, rather than the Wilsonian idealistic view, that neoconservatism attempts to combine.

Similarly, Krauthammer's *Foreign Affairs* article, which was adapted from his Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture, (1990) emphasised that America should use its unipolar moment in which "the center of the world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States" (1991:p.23) to maximise power. Krauthammer reinforced these neoconservative views, that America's power is paramount and that it should also be unconstrained during its unipolar moment, even by the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, he was just as disparaging about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when considering intervention as Cold War neoconservatives. Krauthammer argued that "the domestic American consensus for an internationalist foreign policy, a consensus radically weakened by the experience in Vietnam would substantially be restored now that policies and debate by 'an inordinate fear of communism' could be safe retired" (1991:p.23). The post-Cold War, "American pre-eminence is based on the fact that it is the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses to involve itself" (p.24). Krauthammer explicitly promoted the Jacksonian foreign policy principle of unilateral military intervention and belittled the American public's caution and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. He stated, "why it should matter to Americans that their

actions get a Security Council nod from, say, Deng Xiaop and the butchers of Tiananmen Square is beyond me" (p.25-26).

Neoconservatives' stress on enhancing US power with little interest in using international institutions as Krauthammer exemplified provoked critics such as Maria Ryan to argue that Wilsonianism is not truly part of their foreign policy approach:

Neoconservatism should be evaluated on the basis that it was a strategy dedicated to preserving and extending America's supposed position as a single pole of world power…It did not constitute a new variant of Wilsonianism. Rather it was a strategy that was devoted to projecting American power in accordance with an expansive definition of the national interest; namely, remaining 'the single pole of world power' that could intervene decisively 'in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses' (2010:p.6).

Her assessment carries weight, but it needs more nuance. Neoconservatives' Jacksonian aims of maximising American power was often prioritised over moral leadership across both generations of neoconservatives at policy-level. Jacksonian neoconservatives believed that American primacy was good for American and global security because they only attack when feeling threatened. The younger neoconservative generation such as Kagan and Wolfowitz put more emphasis on Wilsonian ideals rhetorically, but often to silence dissident public opinion. They regarded the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as a national disease that needed curing through a militarily 'strong' America instead of treating it as valid caution to direct intervention towards causes closer to the national interest that avoided open-ended crusades. Furthermore, whether certain neoconservatives displayed more Jacksonian or Wilsonian beliefs, they both regarded the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and its concerns as a defeatist premise for approaching military intervention. Therefore both groups amongst neoconservatives believed that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome undermined assessing of how to achieve a success when engaging military intervention.

Indeed, George W. Bush openly embraced the idea of a crusading foreign policy approach, claiming that "this crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient" (2001). Therefore, whilst neoconservatives have rhetorically employed Wilsonian ideals, it was predominantly used selectively to maximise US power through democracy promotion by using Jacksonian unilateral military action, that contradicted Wilsonian principles of international institutions and law. In effect, the Wilsonian language has been used by neoconservatives as a rhetorical device to marginalise the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by emphasising the morality of their democracy promotion agenda. However, at policy-level, they believed in conducting

intervention by using Jacksonian principles through unilateralism and ignoring international institutions, with the main objective to maximise US power by destroying threats abroad, rather than investing deeply in building democracy. Moreover, whether neoconservatives used more Wilsonian or Jacksonian justifications, they showed hostility to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and Americans that were cautious towards military intervention.

Saddam Hussein and how 9/11 changed the Vietnam Syndrome paradigm

This sections explores how neoconservatives identified their post-Cold War 'monster to destroy' as the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein after the 1990-91 Gulf War. Furthermore, it analyses how the neoconservatives exploited the 9/11 attacks to depose Saddam's regime when American attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome became less sensitive to military action during a crisis and emergency and was replaced by a more supportive mood. Additionally, this section will discuss how the George W. Bush administration and the neoconservatives used more Jacksonian rhetoric to make a public case for the Iraq War by stressing the threat of WMDs to America, rather than Wilsonian democracy promotion.

Neoconservatives had advocated for removing Saddam since the end of the Gulf War when George H.W. Bush had led an international coalition to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The Iraqi dictator invaded after he accused the Kuwaitis of drilling in the Rumaila oil fields in southern Iraq. Furthermore, Saddam demanded that a $14 billion dollar debt that he owed Kuwait after its government supported Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 until 1988 had to be cancelled (Selwood, 2017). In response, Bush adopted a combination of a mostly Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian approach towards the Gulf War. The Hamiltonian concerns focused on the economic motives concerned with energy security whilst simultaneously showing Jeffersonian sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome under the Powell Doctrine, which was modelled from the Weinberger Doctrine. Bush's approach also displayed some specific Wilsonian elements related to collective security. Furthermore, the Powell Doctrine paid even more attention to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in part because Powell himself was a Vietnam War veteran. Reflecting on his hesitancy towards intervening in Kuwait, Powell emphasised his belief that military leaders should provide complete honesty about the consequences of war. "As a midlevel career officer, I had been appalled at the docility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, fighting the war in Vietnam without ever pressing the political leaders to lay out clear objectives for them" (2004:p.185).

A day after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Powell was sceptical that military intervention with the cooperation with allies would bring resolution. During a National Security Council (NSC) meeting, Powell emphasised the magnitude of the challenges of confronting Saddam, stating:

This would be the NFL, not a scrimmage. It would mean a major confrontation. Most US forces would have to be committed to sustain, not for just one or two days. He is a professional megalomaniac. But the ratio is weighted in his favour. They also are experienced from eight years of war (against Iran) (1990:p.9).

Powell's personal experience in the Vietnam War influenced him to add more two questions from the Weinberger Doctrine. First, questioning whether a military intervention has a plausible exit strategy to avoid a quagmire similar to the Vietnam War. Second, questioning if it has genuine international support to politically justify the cause and help reduce risking US fatalities (1992/1993). "Having a clear exit strategy was as important as having a clear entry strategy. The Gulf War was the obvious model. The United States went in big on behalf of limited, achievable objectives" (Record, 2007:p.83). The preference for limited warfare that committed to specific US commercial and economic interests abroad whilst considering domestic factors such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, reflected Bush's Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian considerations to his approach towards the Gulf War. Furthermore, Bush felt bolstered by the success of his small and quick military intervention in Panama that the support of 77% of Americans according to the Los Angeles Times (1989). The intervention lasted a little over a month from December 1989 until January 1990, resulting in the removal of the dictator, General Manuel Noriega, who was wanted by US authorities for racketeering and drug trafficking.

Nevertheless, he was not immune from using Wilsonian moralising about the lessons of Munich analogy to rally public support for war that previous presidents had utilised. When announcing the deployment of US navy ships to Saudi Arabia, he made existential warnings by comparing Saddam's threat to that of Hitler, stating that, "if history teaches us anything, it is that we must resist aggression, or it will destroy our freedoms. Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbours" (1990). Powell and Bush's National Security Advisor, Brent Snowcroft disliked personalising warfare this way because it obfuscated the assessment of contemporary military decisions with emotional analogies about past conflicts with different circumstances (Powell & Persico, 1995:p.491).

However, Bush conveyed a more sober tone about using ground troops and acknowledged the public anxieties and its memories of Vietnam in his decision-making when a Los Angeles Times poll in November 1990 found that 62% of Americans feared that the crisis in the Gulf was likely to "bog down and become another Vietnam situation" (1990). Bush explained that "in our country, I know that there are fears of another Vietnam. Let me assure you, should military action be required, this will not be another Vietnam. This will not be a protracted, drawn-out war" (1990). Bush also

highlighted the different circumstances in which the Gulf War was being fought compared to the Vietnam War, whereby the opponent and terrain was less challenging and posed less risk of entering a quagmire. Additionally, he underlined the multinational support for the intervention with professional US soldiers in the military by choice were being deployed, unlike in Vietnam when the draft was used. He stated that, "forces arrayed are different; the resupply of Saddam's military would be very different; the countries united against him in the United Nations are different; the topography of Kuwait is different, and the motivation of our all-volunteer force" (Ibid). Americans remained reluctant to committing ground troops, with only 17% showing support to do so on February 10, 1991, compared to 74% preferring to continue relying on airpower (Gallup, 1991). Even when Bush announced on February 22 that Saddam had to withdraw Iraqi troops from Kuwait by noon the next day, only 46% of Americans supported a ground war (Ibid). US public support only significantly increased to 84% when ground operations began on February 24 (Ibid).

Oil was clearly a factor in Bush's decision to militarily intervene since the conflict began over disputes about the energy resource. Allowing Saddam and his Iraqi military to remain in Kuwait would have left him in control of approximately 20% of the world's proven oil supply according to Oil and Gas Journal (1991). The UNSC's immediate response days after the invasion was to pass Resolution 661 that placed an embargo on Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil (1990). However, Bush administration officials still feared that the longer the embargo persisted, the more likely countries would subvert it to access cheaper Iraqi oil. In an NSC meeting, the Secretary of State James Baker warned that "the Central Bank of Jordan is allowing Iraq to use Jordanian accounts" (1990). The economic incentives for the Gulf War led Mead to argue that George H.W. Bush was a Hamiltonian president that acted with narrower commercial interests and more realistic goals by applying the Powell Doctrine, rather than pursuing broader missionary democracy promotion. (2010:63). The factor of oil also garnered support from Jacksonian neoconservatives because they "were accepting of the push for US intervention against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait as the Iraqi dictator's move was perceived as a threat to world oil supplies, and hence a potential threat to the economic well-being of Jacksonian America" (Clarke & Ricketts, 2017:p.19). Nevertheless, oil supplies is not the sole explanation for the military intervention. Ashley Cox argues that "the economic argument fails to explain several key events of the crisis. A purely economic motivation would not explain the United States failing to push on into Iraq and removing Saddam from power. By leaving him in power the United Nations was obliged to continue its embargo on oil preventing it returning to the world market" (2021:p.124).

George H.W. Bush's Wilsonian elements to his approach towards the Gulf War shown by his building of support amongst international allies and the UN to strengthen collective security were

also important to managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Bush stated that "I did know for sure that the aggression had to stopped, and Kuwait's sovereignty restored" (1998:p.315). Cox argued that "the sovereignty is one of the core parts of the Wilsonian framework; if nations are allowed to invade each other with comeuppance from the international community then the entire premise of Wilsonian collective security is for naught" (2021:p.125). Moreover, Bush's partial Wilsonian considerations helped steady public support, as 62% of Americans expressed support when they were reminded that it included backing from the UN and allies, compared to 52% when they were not mentioned in polling questions (Gallup, 1990). Bush therefore worked hard to hold the international coalition for collective security, and sent Wolfowitz to persuade the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir not to retaliate against Iraqi missiles fired at them to provoke collapsing the alliance that involved Arab states (Arens, 2018). From an Israeli perspective, Meridor, who was in the Israeli government at the time, claimed that "Shamir was the guy that needs to be given credit" for staying out of the war (2021). Furthermore, the Bush administration limited the media's access to the war to maintain public support and control the narrative. Notably, Bush and the Secretary of Defence, Dick Cheney enforced a media ban in February 1991 from attending the return of fallen soldiers to control what the public saw and maintain its support (James, 2009).

Additionally, Bush's Wilsonian traits influenced his efforts to avoid provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by respecting the agreed objectives in the UN mandate. In doing so, he did not send troops to Baghdad to topple Saddam after removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait that would have risked entering a military quagmire. Bush and Snowcroft reflected on their decision when they had left office, and explained that:

We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, furthermore, we had been self-consciously trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-cold war world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the U.N.'s mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression we hoped to establish (1998).

The decision to not remove Saddam was also influenced by concerns about provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. A Gallup poll in December 1990 revealed that 74% of Americans understood what its military would be fighting for in the Gulf War (1990). This suggested that Bush had addressed the potential challenges that make up the Vietnam Syndrome, and he did not want to jeopardise that. An administration official highlighted the concerns of entering a military quagmire akin to Vietnam- "We decided early on that if there was anything that could turn this into a Vietnam

conflict it was going into densely populated areas and getting twelve soldiers a day killed by snipers. The main reason was that if we went in to overthrow (Saddam Hussein), how would we get out? If we set up a puppet government, how would we disentangle? (1992:p.146). Trevor McCrisken highlighted that, "the impact of analogous thinking on US policymaking in 1990-91 is clear: while the Munich analogy had convinced the administration to use force against Iraq, it was the Vietnam analogy that contributed to the decision not to pursue the war beyond the stated objective of liberating Kuwait" (2007:p.160). Therefore, the Gulf War had a combination of a Hamiltonian economic interests in oil, Jeffersonian concerns about domestic public opinion and some Wilsonian behaviour by following of a UN mandate for collective security. Nevertheless, whilst Bush declared that the successful campaign of the Gulf War ensured that "the specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian Peninsula" (1991), it actually worked within what was palatable to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

The neoconservatives, however, took the success of the Gulf War and George H.W. Bush's claim as the Jacksonian definitive military victory they had searched for since Reagan. Therefore, they believed it paved way for America to have a relatively unconstrained foreign policy approach to use future military intervention to maximise US power and spread Wilsonian ideals as an unrivalled power to reshape the world and defeat perceived threats without domestic constraints. Neoconservatives thought that the legacy of the Vietnam War and the public's fears of entering a similar conflict no longer had much relevance. Instead, neoconservatives argued that America's foreign policy approach should look towards the future, rather than fear repeating the past military mistakes. Thereafter, the neoconservatives targeted Saddam Hussein as their main post-Cold-War enemy and worked to build support to remove him throughout the 1990s up to the 2003 Iraq War.

However, more Jacksonian neoconservatives also thought that leaving Saddam in power was a mistake by failing to nullify a threat to US interests that they claimed could have similar consequences to 'Munich' rather than 'Vietnam'. Jacksonians believed that "the most costly decision George Bush took in the Gulf War was not to send ground forces into Iraq, but to stop short of the occupation of Baghdad and the capture and trial of Saddam Hussein" (Mead, 2000:p.6). Even before the Gulf War, Richard Perle called for Saddam's removal, arguing that "our objectives must be dismantling or destroying Saddam Hussein's military power. Nothing less will suffice...Only by crushing Saddam Hussein and his war machine can we begin to build a stable political order in the Middle East" (1990). After the Gulf War, Kristol phoned his political ally, Krauthammer, and they both expressed their dismay about what they regarded as unfinished business. Kristol recalled that, "I was one of those who thought that we should have finished off Saddam at the end of the war. We both agreed this was a big mistake" (2003). Neoconservatives' urgency to remove Saddam solidified after

he had used chemical weapons against killed around 5,000 Kurds and Shias using chemical weapons in 1991 (Arms Control Association), George H.W. Bush did not forcefully respond. In 1994, Wolfowitz, a more Wilsonian neoconservative, criticised Clinton's foreign policy approach, claiming the "administration has done virtually nothing to call Iraq to account for its renewed claim on Kuwait, its border incursions, its oppression of Shia in the south, or its war crimes in Kuwait" (p.40).

The neoconservatives' hostility towards Saddam was part of their broader fears of small states obtaining weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), demonstrated by Krauthammer's warning of, "the emergence of a new strategic environment, marked by the rise of small aggressive states armed with weapons of mass destruction and possessing the means to deliver them (what might be called Weapon States), makes the coming decades a time of heightened, not diminished threat of war" (1990/1991:p.23). Saddam had raised concerns amongst other foreign policymakers and the international community as well as neoconservatives. In 1997, he expelled American weapon inspectors and refused to cooperate with UN inspectors a year later which reinforced neoconservative's belief that he was becoming a bigger threat (CNN). The neoconservatives' position therefore, gained more traction in Washington, and in 1998, Congress passed the Iraqi Liberation Act, which stated that "it should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq" (1998). The same year, the UN Special Commission, whose job it was to dismantle Saddam's nuclear weapons programme left after complaining about being obstructed from completing its inspection (Jeffery & Pank, 2002). Clinton then responded militarily with a four-day bombing campaign on the justification to target sites that were used in any effort to obtain materials for WMDs. However, the Secretary of State, Albright, explained that its purpose was "not designed to get Saddam Hussein, but to degrade his abilities in the areas of weapons of mass destruction" (1998). Later the UN inspector, Scott Ritter said that Iraq no longer had WMDs capabilities (1998).

Neoconservatives wanted to go further than degrading Saddam's WMDs capabilities; they wanted to remove him as any potential threat before he could become one. In 1997, Kristol and Kagan co-founded the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) think-tank. In a letter to Clinton, the PNAC called for a new US foreign policy strategy to remove Saddam Hussein. argued that "we can no longer depend on our partners in the Gulf War coalition to continue to uphold the sanctions or to punish Saddam when he blocks or evades UN inspections. Our ability to ensure that Saddam Hussein is not producing weapons of mass destruction, therefore, has substantially diminished" (1998). It went on to say that "the only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term it means

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removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power" (Ibid). Signatories of the letter, included Elliot Abrams, Richard Armitage, John Bolton, Zalmay Khalilzad, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Robert Zoellick. They all went on to serve in the George W. Bush administration. Additionally, a PNAC paper titled 'Rebuilding America's Defenses', outlining how to achieve American pre-eminence stated that, "further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalysing event–like a new Pearl Harbor" (2000:p.51).

Kristol and Kagan called for regime change in their Weekly Magazine article in 1997, headlined, "Saddam Must Go", arguing that "we know it seems unthinkable to propose another ground attack to take Baghdad. But it's time to start thinking the unthinkable" (1997). The same year, the magazine published a co-authored article by Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad, titled, "Overthrow Him", advocating the same position (1997). Therefore, neoconservatives portrayed Saddam as the post-Cold War threat to America that Jacksonians are wary of, who had to be urgently removed. Furthermore, they would not be deterred themselves by the domestic politics of America and public concerns about risking quagmire similar to the Vietnam War.

The attack on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, became the catastrophic event akin to a new Pearl Harbor that the neoconservatives believed that they had warned of. Osama bin-Laden and his terrorist organisation al-Qaeda, orchestrated suicide attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, and another into the Pentagon, killing 2,997 people in response to America's foreign policy approach in the Middle East. George W. Bush's Chief of Staff, Andrew Card recalled telling him when another plane had hit the second tower, thereby confirming that this was not an accident but a planned operation, that "America is under attack"(NBC, 2009). 9/11 only solidified the neoconservatives' view that their warning of the lessons of Munich was correct. Furthermore, it reinforced their belief that America needed to proactively search for new threats even during more peaceful times with few rivals, by readily using military intervention to nullify them. Kristol wrote in his book 'The War Over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission' with Lawrence Kaplan that, "our policymakers may be consumed by the lessons of Vietnam, but the rest of the world plays by Munich rules" (2003:p.117). They believed that US foreign policymakers had abided to closely to the lessons of Vietnam that encouraged excessive caution by listening to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that they believed endangered US security. 9/11 made the neoconservatives feel vindicated as evidence that they had not dealt with threat adequately. In its aftermath, hesitancy amongst public opinion towards using military intervention lowered. Furthermore, there was an impressionable president in office that was relatively unknowledgeable about foreign policy, and the neoconservatives believed that their moment had arrived to implement their foreign policy approach.

George W. Bush was not a neoconservative when he had first assumed office. Furthermore, Bush's politics were not significantly affected by the Vietnam War, despite being a young man during the height of the conflict. Bush "seemed oddly indifferent to the great issue of the day—Vietnam. While many of his generation marched off to fight in the war and others protested it, he remained largely outside the great debate. He volunteered for the Texas Air National Guard, knowing that this would minimize his chances of being sent to Indochina" (Daalder & Lindsey, 2005:p.20). Bush expressed little interest in foreign policy as a presidential candidate, and when he did, he campaigned more as a Jacksonian, criticising Clinton's nation-building. He stated that the purpose of military intervention should be to "fight and win war"(2000), and also campaigned on a Jacksonian foreign policy approach by criticising Clinton's humanitarian interventions and called for using military intervention for narrow national interests. During the second presidential debate in the 2000 election against the Vice President Al Gore, claiming, "we should not send our troops to stop ethnic cleansing and genocide in nations outside our strategic interest" (Ibid).

Therefore, in its opening eight months, "the Bush administration's pre-9/11 approach was described by its defenders as 'Americanist'. It combined a strong tendency towards unilateralism with a willingness to disengage (notably in the Middle East) from apparently intractable regional conflicts. Unilateralism—the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change was, of course, the celebrated example"…"George W. Bush's foreign policy was also notable for the very early emergence of high-level splits, notably between Secretary of State Colin Powell's defence of multilateralism and the pugnacious 'Americanism' of Donald Rumsfeld and the Vice-President Richard Cheney" (Dumbrell, 2005:p.36-7). The 'Americanists' shared Jacksonian objectives with neoconservatives such as achieving US primacy and taking a unilateral foreign policy approach. However, unlike neoconservatives, they did not prioritise Wilsonian ideals such as democracy promotion. "Against this background there emerged the carnage and crimes of 11 September 2001. Many of the features of the 'post-Cold War era'—Vietnam Syndrome inhibitions on the use of US military power; apparently galloping economic globalization; the growing global importance of Sino-American rivalry—were immediately called into question" (Dumbrell, 2005:p.37).

Bush's initial response to 9/11 resembled a more Jacksonian foreign policy approach by militarily intervening in Afghanistan to kill bin Laden and destroy the threat of al-Qaeda, with little interest in Wilsonian democracy promotion. When reflecting on 9/11 in his autobiography, Bush exemplified his Jacksonian vengefulness (Holland, 2019:p.44), stating, "my blood was boiling. We were going to find out who did this, and kick their ass" (Bush, 2011:p.128). Holland explained that for a Jacksonian, in incidents of direct attack "such as Pearl Harbor, or 9/11—Total War is a legitimate

option for a policy response. American armed forces should be fully equipped to deliver victory at all costs" (2019:p.42).

Mead noted that Bush's vengeful response by militarily intervening in Afghanistan in the aim of destroying the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as killing bin Laden, reflected more Jacksonian characteristics in his foreign policy approach, rather than Wilsonian democracy promotion. Moreover, the case made to Americans to invade Iraq was similarly about destroying threats in the form of WMDs, rather than Wilsonian idealism and democracy promotion. "Bush's tough-minded Jacksonian response to 9/11—invading Afghanistan and toppling the Taliban government that gave safe haven to the plotters gave way to what appeared to be Wilsonian meddling in Iraq. Originally, Bush's argument for overthrowing Saddam Hussein rested on two charges that resonated powerfully with Jacksonians: Hussein was building weapons of mass destruction, and he had close links with al-Qaeda." (2010:p.60).

Melvyn Leffler's book, 'Confronting Saddam' (2023), argues that there were three factors were particularly involved in the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq. Firstly, he argues that fear of another similar attack to 9/11 when deciding to invade, secondly, power and the concern that US enemies would feel that they could exploit a weakened America after a domestic attack, and thirdly hubris through the administration's overly optimistic belief in what America's military power could achieve (2023). Furthermore, Leffler argued that "hawkish advisers like Rumsfeld, Cheney and Libby and their neoconservative allies like Wolfowitz and Feith, were not inspired by missionary fervour or idealistic impulses…the motive was 'self-defense'" (p.98). Leffler's argument that Bush had little concern for Wilsonian ideals received criticism, however. Mario Del Pero countered that "Leffler tends to neglect the bombastic exceptionalist nationalism, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. He offers only some cursory remarks on the essence of such discourse within the administration, in particular the stunningly radical 2002 national security strategy statement, in words 'freedom' and 'liberty' appeared 60 times in little more than 30 pages" (2023). The 2002 National Security Strategy that reverberated Wolfowitz's advocacy for preventative wars by calling for "anticipatory action"(p.15), and as well as stating that "humanity holds in its hands the opportunity to further freedom's triumph over all these foes. The United States welcomes our responsibility to lead in this great mission" (Ibid). The latter sentence in the document demonstrates that the Bush administration used Wilsonian idealism rhetorically to the public that reflected a "vindicator" (Brands, 1998:p.39) approach to American exceptionalism. However, both writers miss in their respective analysis that Jacksonian motives to maximise US power and destroy threats to it had greater influence in Bush's policy approach towards military intervention, through pre-emptive and unilateral action, as the Iraq War was broadly executed.

Despite Leffler and Mead's downplaying of the Wilsonian elements of Bush's foreign policy approach and the role of the neoconservatives in his decision to invade Iraq, he did show Wilsonian beliefs beforehand as early as his address to Americans on the evening of 9/11. He stressed that the terrorism was an attack on core American values and that it was done because the perpetrators "hate our freedom" (2001), which he often emphasised to the American public to justify the War on Terror. Furthermore, he ended the address by heavily indicating that Wilsonian idealism would feature in his foreign policy approach from that point onwards, by stating that "we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world" (Ibid). Lawrence Wright noted that "W's opinion of the role of America in the world was very much formed by his father's experience in World War Two. So many sons of fathers like that, they look back at how America saved civilisation as they saw it. That image of a powerful America, sheltering the rest of the world under its arm was very much in Bush's mind" (2020).

Lawrence Wilkerson was the Chief of Staff to Colin Powell when he was George W. Bush's Secretary of State, and both were reluctant to invade Iraq. Wilkerson, who also fought in Vietnam, claimed that the Bush administration wanted to make Saddam an enemy to unite the public around to fulfil their long-term ambition to remove him. "Afghanistan really didn't do it. Afghanistan did not send a signal to the world, don't mess with the United States, we need a state actor. Saddam Hussein, let's go after him. That'll send a signal to the world that you don't mess with the United States"(PBS, 2020). Furthermore, Barton Gellman argued George W. Bush began to sympathise with neoconservatives that Saddam should have been removed after the 1991 Gulf War. Gellman posited that "Bush developed a sense that there was unfinished business from the first Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s, that leaving Saddam in power had been a mistake. Bush was attracted to the idea of finishing something his father had left undone. There was also a strong sense that Iraq was a growing threat to US interests, and that was because the regime of arms control restriction and sanctions that was keeping Iraq bottled up after that first Gulf War were beginning to erode" (2020). When answering questions for this research thesis, Wilkerson recalled that the Bush administration's approach to public opinion over Iraq relied on "propaganda. They manufactured it hourly, from outside the government by quasi-government individuals like Richard Perle to inside the government in a DOD (Department of Defense) office designed for such purposes and run by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith" (2022). Additionally he said that both himself and Powell feared that a potential war in Iraq "would be like Vietnam in the sense of endless casualties, no end in sight, little if any decisive win, and ultimately an ignominious withdrawal" (Ibid).

The Bush administration therefore exploited the post-9/11 public mood whereby the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had partially softened amidst the 9/11 crisis, and elements that

remained became more marginalised by emotive support to aggressively respond. 77% supported "military action, including ground troops, even if it meant thousands of US casualties" (Pew, 2001) shortly after 9/11. Bush and the neoconservatives therefore turned their attention to Iraq having long wanted to remove Saddam, and the American public opinion had become more tolerant towards military intervention. As early as October 2001, the Weekly Standard used this momentum and published an issue of Wild West style pictures of bin Laden and Saddam, titled, "Wanted", on the frontpage, baselessly connecting them to 9/11 (2001).

The Bush administration predominantly used the threat of WMDs as the primary argument to the American public, alongside linking Saddam to al-Qaeda to invade Iraq, rather than Wilsonian democracy promotion. Chaim Kaufmann noted that the Bush administration's public campaign to generate support focused much more on the threat that Saddam posed, rather than democracy promotion. "It was not until the summer of 2002, however, that they began their public campaign to generate support for preventive war to achieve this objective. They made four main arguments to persuade the public of their case against Saddam Hussein: (1) he was an almost uniquely undeterrable aggressor who would seek any opportunity to kill Americans virtually regardless of risk to himself or his country; (2) he was cooperating with al-Qa'ida and had even assisted in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States; (3) he was close to acquiring nuclear weapons; and (4) he possessed chemical and biological weapons that could be used to devastating effect against American civilians at home or U.S. troops in the Middle East" (2004:p.6). Bush's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice demonstrated the Jacksonian emphasis on threats by using apocalyptic language that warned of the dangers of waiting to remove Saddam, stating that "we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud" (CNN, 2002).

Furthermore, the neoconservatives responded to criticism from politicians and the general public by vilifying them, similarly as they had done before. Post-9/11, Bush framed the evaluation of his foreign policy approach starkly, as tantamount to either supporting or opposing America. He remarked that "either you are with us or with the terrorists" (2001), showing the Jacksonian worldview of basing enemies and friendships on whether others would help advance US interests to tackle threats, or be obstructive to doing this. The aggressive tone was also used against opposition amongst the American public, such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, whereby "opposition could become equated with anti-Americanism" (Restad, 2014:p.233). A notable example was the Republican's treatment of the Democratic senator for Georgia, Max Cleland during the 2002 midterm, a Vietnam War veteran who had lost three limbs in 1968. Cleland feared that a war in Iraq would become a similar mess to Vietnam, but Bush held a Senate vote in October to authorise military action, a month before the midterm elections, to put pressure Democrats to vote for the

war, which Cleland and 28 others did. "Republican leaders were not overly worried about their ability to garner support for a war to oust the Iraqi dictator. Most Democrats hesitated to speak out against the war because they grasped the popularity of Bush's position on this issue and because they wanted to concentrate on jobs and the economy" (Leffler, 2023:p.171). Congress overwhelmingly backed Iraq Resolution in 2002 to authorise war with Democrats fearful of losing their seats in mid-terms only a month later (CNN). Cleland's misgivings were still used against him in the Congressional race by his Republican opponent, Saxby Chambliss, portraying him as traitorous with campaign adverts "that showed images of Osama bin-Laden and Saddam Hussein and implied Cleland wasn't standing up to them" (Ricks, 2006:p.63). Cleland lost the election and said that he "went down-physically, mentally, emotionally-down into the deepest, darkest hole in my life...thirty-seven years later, and I have a president creating a Vietnam" (Ibid). Nationally, despite the Democrat's bipartisanship, the Republicans still gained public support and won full control of Congress in the 2002 mid-terms. They won the Senate, and retained the House of Representatives, a rarity for a governing party.

Nevertheless, the American public support for Iraq was tentative. The mid-term election was not the equivalent of clear public support for invading Iraq and was more of an indication of a continuing 'rally around the flag' mood. Furthermore, despite some belief that the media has a huge influence on public opinion (Mueller, 2006), the case of the Iraq War is more complex. The "'rally round the flag' effect is usually superficial and short-lived. It is also highly contextual and impossible to reliably or wholly manufacture apart from the inherent circumstances of the case" (Dueck, 2009: p.143). In the build up to the war in November 2002, only three in ten Americans supported it without UN authorisation (Gallup). Bush himself expressed some concern during a meeting on December 21, 2002, when Director and Deputy of the CIA respectively, George Tenet, and John McLaughlin presented 'the case' to indicate the existence of WMDs. Bush said that "it was not something that Joe Public would understand or gain a lot of confidence from" (Woodward, 2004:p.49). Bush previously revealed his disregard for public opinion and those of more generally disagree with him during the build up to the war, stating that, "I'm the commander, see. I don't need to explain" (Woodward, 2002:p.145-46). Furthermore, in January 2003 when Bush spoke with his ally the Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, who supported the then proposed war, Bush demonstrated his view to not yield to defeatist public opinion such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, stating that, "we lead our publics. We cannot follow our publics" (Woodward, 2004:p.298).

Bush showed some Wilsonian traits by his attempt to obtain a UN resolution to invade Iraq, which was partially about appealing to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome at home, but it was

particularly related to international factors. Firstly, Bush's Secretary of State, Colin Powell pushed

most for a UN resolution despite protests from Cheney and Rumsfeld, in order to win broad

international support for military action. Powell emphasised during the planning of the war that "this

is not going to be a walk in the woods…you need allies…you can still make a pitch for a coalition of

U.N. action"(2004:p.150-1). Bush's subsequent pitch to the UN in September 2002 used Wilsonian

rhetoric, claiming that "the people of Iraq can shake off their captivity. They can one day join a

democratic Afghanistan" (2002). Bush also expressed his desire to see Iraq become democratic in his

speech to the American Enterprise Institute in February 2003, stating that, "the nation of Iraq—with

its proud heritage, abundant resources and skilled and educated people—is fully capable of moving

toward democracy and living in freedom" (2003). His public case for the Iraq War therefore implicitly

combined Jacksonian concerns about the threat of WMDs with Wilsonian concerns about unfriendly

undemocratic states being less transparent about its military capabilities and consequently posing a

danger.

Furthermore, Bush attempted to show more Wilsonian ideals by willing to cooperate more

with the multinational institution, saying that, "as a symbol of our commitment to human dignity, the

United States will return to UNESCO. This organization has been reformed and America will

participate fully in its mission to advance human rights and tolerance and learning" (Ibid). Bush had

some success when the UNSC unanimously passed the Resolution 1441 in November that year which

gave Saddam a final opportunity to comply with his disarmament obligations that had been set out in

previous resolutions. Additionally, by January 2003, Bush received European support in the 'letter of

eight', the leaders of Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the

United Kingdom, accused Saddam Hussein of continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction

and urged the UN Security Council to act against that threat (2003). However, Dominique de

Villepen, the Foreign Minister of the UNSC permanent member, France, scuppered any chance of

passing a resolution when he claimed in January 2003 that "nothing justifies envisaging military

action" (2003).

The second particular reason that Bush tried to work with the UN was to help his

international ally, the British prime minister, Tony Blair. Bush recalled that "the second resolution,

which we introduced on February 24, 2003, was important for another reason. Tony was facing

intense internal pressure on the issue of Iraq, and it was important for him to show that he had

exhausted every possible alternative to military force" (2010:p.246). Blair believed it was important

to build an international coalition through the UN stating that "public support in key nations, like

France and Germany could not be garnered if they did not act under the auspices of the United

Nations" (Leffler, 2023:p.143). Blair wrote to Bush in July 2002 that "my real point is that opinion in

the U.S. is quite simply on a different planet from opinion here, in Europe, or the Arab world" (2002). People elsewhere simply didn't "have the same sense of urgency post-9/11 as people in the U.S.; they suspect—and are told by populist politicians—that it's all to do with 43 settling the score with the enemy of 41" (2010). However, Bush appeared less concerned about this perception, and he used Powell's presentation to the UN for his political advantage with Americans at home to win over more support by having a decorated veteran and respected administration member give evidence of Saddam's WMDs programme. When Americans were asked who they trusted more between Bush and Powell on US policy on Iraq, 24% said Bush, and 63% said Powell (Gallup, 2003). Moreover, in the build up to Powell's presentation to the UNSC in February 2003 for the case that Iraq had WMDs, 60% said it would be "very important" to determining their view of whether to invade, with 27% saying it would be "somewhat important" (Gallup).

Bush's strategy of emphasising the threat of Saddam possessing WMDs and claiming that he had links to al-Qaeda was relatively successful as 72% of Americans supported the war when it began in March 2003 (Gallup). Three days before the invasion, Vice President Cheney was asked on Meet The Press by Tim Russert, "do you think the American people are prepared for a long, costly, and bloody battle with significant American casualties?" (2003), to which Cheney answered, "I don't think it's likely to unfold that way, Tim, because I really do believe that we will be greeted as liberators" (Ibid). This messaging influenced many Americans as 41% believed that less than 100 American soldiers would be killed and 34% believed it would only be a several hundred in March 2003 (Gallup). Furthermore, most Americans believed that the war would be quick, with 25% believing that the war would last less than a month and 35% believing that it would be between one and three months (Ibid).

Additionally, parts of the media were more explicitly pro-war in its build up to compared to the Vietnam War. Notably, Fox News was the most viewed news station, and it "was the news source whose viewers had the most misperceptions" (Kull, Ramsey & Lewis, 2003/4:p.582), exemplified by its viewers having been the most likely to believe that Saddam had ties to al-Qaeda at 67%, which Bush peddled (Ibid). Additionally, outlets that had been known to usually be more balanced also created misconceptions. Journalists, such as Judith Miller in the New York Times, which is regarded as a more balanced outlet, also took a pro-war position. Through Miller's access to the Bush administration, she communicated its narrative of the threat of WMDs through unnamed "intelligence experts" and the existence of "aluminum tubes" (2002). Bush officials, such as Powell, the National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Rumsfeld cited Miller's articles to reinforce their case (2004). Furthermore, 69% of Americans believed that Saddam was directly involved in 9/11 according to a study by the University of Maryland (2003).

Nevertheless, "closer examination of public attitudes, however, indicated a certain brittleness of support, evident in a range of areas: worries about going it alone; strong partisan splits; and concerns about dangers in the aftermath of war" (Dumbrell, 2005:p.43). Moreover, as a likely consequence of the polarising behaviour of the Bush administration and the Republican Party, public support and opposition fell deeply down partisan lines. Ole Holsti observed that, "partisan and ideological gaps were very large, whereas those based on gender and region were considerably narrower. Republicans, conservatives, men and, less strikingly, westerners emerged as the strongest supporters of the military campaign"(2011:p.230). According to the Gallup poll that showed 72% of Americans in overall support of the war, 93% of Republicans were in support whilst 5% opposed compared to 53% of Democrats that supported it and 44% that opposed (2003). The Bush administration did not fully ignore public opinion as a whole, but it rallied its existing partisan support rather and used fear to emphasise the threat of Iraq. This was instead of appealing to the sceptics of invading Iraq and particularly the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and concerns about logistical challenges to avoid a quagmire.

Therefore, Bush's approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had some success by drowning out the voices within it. Nevertheless, his administration created a febrile environment for triggering before the war even began by raising public suspicions and distrust about the motive to invade Iraq. In early February 2003, many Americans distrusted the claims that Saddam possessed WMDs. 58% of Americans said that they suspected that the Bush administration was "likely to conceal evidence that goes against the administration's position" (Gallup). Furthermore, Leffler argued that the Bush administration lacked focus on the war's main objective, which affected its poor planning and the possibility of provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Leffler posited that the administration was unsure whether the aim was regime change, democracy promotion, disarming Saddam, or a combination of them all in the policymaking process (2023). Bush likely wanted all of these outcomes, but the lack of focus resulted in the war's poor planning that would become a problem because of the lack of a clear objective, and by the time the US military was in Iraq, there was no exit strategy. However, in keeping to a pattern that pre-dated the Iraq War, Bush and the neoconservatives had little interest in dissenting public opinion such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Consequently, there was little effort to persuade sceptics of their rationale to invade Iraq besides making claims about Saddam having WMDs and terrorist links, which provoked partisan division.

When the war began to falter, Bush exemplified a combination of Jacksonian and Wilsonian arguments to appeal to public support and tackle the growing attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and critics concerned about it becoming a quagmire. In 2005 he insisted that, "we have learned from

our experiences and fixed what has not worked...yet there is a difference between honest critics who recognize what is wrong, and defeatists who refuse to see that anything is right...to retreat before victory would be an act of recklessness and dishonor, and I will not allow it" (2005). Bush's emphasis on opposing a withdrawal from Iraq without achieving unequivocal victory and stating that leaving would be an act of dishonour exemplified his Jacksonian worldview. "Jacksonians also opposed 'cut and run' options to end the war in Iraq even as they lost faith in both Bush and the Republican Party; they don't like wars for democracy, but they also don't want to see the United States lose once troops and the national honor have been committed" (Mead, 2010:p.61). Jacksonians similarly saw "Lyndon Johnson's inability to fight unlimited war for unconditional surrender in Vietnam cost him his presidency in 1968" (Mead, 2000:p.24). Furthermore, Bush also attempted to publicly defend the war with Wilsonian arguments, particularly when WMDs were not found. "The war dragged on, and as Hussein's fabled hoards of WMD failed to appear and the links between Iraq and al-Qaeda failed to emerge, Bush shifted to a Wilsonian rationale" (Mead, 2010:p.60). He stated in 2005 "that the seeds of freedom have only recently been planted in Iraq -- but democracy, when it grows, is not a fragile flower; it is a healthy, sturdy tree" (2005). Therefore, Bush demonstrated a continuation of the neoconservatives' approach towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that tried to approach them by determinedly trying to achieve the goals for military success, rather than adopt a cautious set of conditions that he saw as defeatist before even beginning to use military intervention.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the development of the neoconservatives' approach to domestic public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. It explained how their ideas formulated through Wilsonians and Jacksonians responding to the anti-Vietnam War protests by promoting their respective belief in democracy promotion and maximising power through military intervention. Wilsonians such as Henry Jackson, who supported Kennedy believed in American exceptionalism and democratic peace theory, as well as America possessing a unique global role to promote and bring democracy. Furthermore, they believed in the idea that this was part of an American mission meant that this should generally be prioritised over listening to circumspect public opinion about war. They developed an alliance with Jacksonians, who also opposed leaving Vietnam out of the belief of maintaining honour and American power.

Therefore, neoconservatives often rhetorically tied America's military actions to morality to justify them. This shared ideas with Manifest Destiny as if America had a divine right to change the world. This position was also provoked by historical events, as neoconservatives also believed that it was important for America to learn the lessons of Munich rather than Vietnam. However, they

believed that not only did dictators need to be confronted but that the use American power was necessary to prevent similar atrocities such as the Holocaust that they believed was a result of not using it fast enough. These views were further solidified after the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day-War when there were fears of the county's annihilation. Consequently, neoconservatives thought that Israel was an important strategic ally to promote democracy in an undemocratic region and US security interests.

Nevertheless, there was a fairly consistent pattern in which neoconservatives used Wilsonian rhetoric and idealism of democracy promotion to justify an aggressive militaristic foreign policy approach. However, its more tangible policy objectives often prioritised enhancing American power. Democracy promotion did matter to neoconservatives, especially to the younger post-Cold War adherents that used more Wilsonian language. Nevertheless power, tended to be the main driver for these idealistic goals to enhance US security. Moreover, they showed little interest in listening to public opinion beyond their own supporters. Therefore, they frequently vilified their critics through utilised Jacksonian nationalism and jingoism and would employ Wilsonian rhetoric against the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that was sceptical about military intervention.

In the post-Cold War era, neoconservatives pressured policymakers to take advantage of the 'unipolar moment' to exercise its power and spread American ideals and identified Saddam Hussein as the post-Cold War threat having believed that America should seek a post-Cold War enemy beforehand. They consequently used 9/11 to unleash US power in the hope to bring democracy worldwide. The circumstances appeared advantageous to them as the country was fearful of more threats, making the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were easier to dismiss. Neoconservatives therefore believed that the world was in their hands to change. However, neoconservatives were consistently aggressive towards dissident public opinion. They believed that 9/11 changed the paradigm of American foreign policymaking, whereby Munich instead of Vietnam were the lessons to adhere to. To win enough domestic public support, Bush and the neoconservatives used a combination of Jacksonian rhetoric by emphasising the threat of Saddam and WMDs. The Bush administration then adopted a more Wilsonian foreign policy approach by initially attempting to work with international institutions. It also stressed the need for democracy promotion in Iraq to bring more peace and stability to the Middle East and that Iraqis would embrace Americans and democracy that would make the war short, which somewhat pacified the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Chapter 3: The Vietnam Syndrome and the rise of Obama

Introduction

This chapter will analyse how the failures of the Iraq War provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome which Barack Obama gave voice to as a presidential candidate. It will argue how the Iraq War provoked deeper introspection about the effectiveness of military intervention to promote US ideals. This contrasted with the Vietnam War which triggered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that went little beyond framing the debate around internationalism and isolationism. Moreover, the chapter will analyse how Obama became the candidate that gave the public that represented the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome greater legitimacy. It uses Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions theory, to examine the failures of the neoconservative approach that used rapid unilateral Jacksonian militarism with the Wilsonian ambition to democratise Iraq and coexist peacefully as democracies. Furthermore, the chapter will introduce Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards military intervention that showed sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by considering the domestic implications to foreign policymaking (Mead, 2010).

Firstly however, the chapter's premise that the 2003 Iraq War specifically triggered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome requires further explanation. After all, the Iraq War was part of the Bush administration's broader War on Terror campaign that began in 2001 through the Afghanistan War in response to 9/11. Bush had offered an ultimatum to the Taliban, the ruling body of Afghanistan, to avoid war. He demanded the extradition of Osama bin Laden and for the Taliban to "deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al-Qaeda who hide in your land" (2001). Furthermore, he told the Taliban "close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities" (Ibid). When the Taliban refused, Bush began Operation Enduring Freedom shortly after. In explaining the decision, Bush stated that, "by destroying camps and disrupting communications, we will make it more difficult for the terror network to train new recruits and coordinate their evil plans" (2001). Bush also exemplified his belief that America has a unique role as a moral leader to proactively spread its values, stating that "we defend not only our precious freedoms, but also the freedom of people everywhere" (Ibid).

Therefore, the American public could see a clear rationale for the intervention to apprehend the mastermind of 9/11 bin Laden and his terror group al-Qaeda and to defeat the Taliban which had harboured them. This was reflected in opinion polls that showed as many as 90% of Americans supported the war (Gallup, 2001). Moreover, America received widespread international support to act against Afghanistan. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invoked Article 5 for the first

time in the wake of 9/11 which reaffirmed its commitment that each member state considers an armed attack on one member as an attack on all of them. Additionally, the United Nations (UN), unanimously adopted the Security Council Resolution 1386 to establish an International Security Assistance Force to assist the Afghan Interim Authority after the fall of the Taliban.

The Afghanistan War undoubtedly also became a quagmire, and America's longest war in its history, lasting twenty years. However, it did not have the political effect of provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, because its purpose of fighting those who harboured al-Qaeda was relatively clear, even though it ended in failure with the Taliban regaining power and the US chaotically withdrawing (Harding, 2021). Therefore, the Afghanistan intervention was regarded as "the good war" (Fitzgerald & Ryan, 2014:p.53) and was perceived as an effort to combat terrorism and protect America. Obama himself, as a presidential candidate, positively spoke of it, and directly contrasted it with Iraq, emphasising the need of "getting out of Iraq and on the right battlefield in Afghanistan" (2007). Therefore, the Afghanistan War did not trigger the sentiments of the Vietnam Syndrome during Obama's presidency as he "had a more sophisticated view than often prevails in policymaking circles of what the legacy of Vietnam means in terms of the US public's sensitivity towards casualties and their willingness to continue supporting certain conflicts even as the number of Americans being killed or wounded is rising" (McCrisken, 2012:p.1000).

In contrast, the proposition of the Iraq War divided Americans even before it began. Only 47% approved the war in March 2003 without UN authorisation (Gallup, 2003). Bush abandoned these efforts after it became clear that France and Germany would not sanction the intervention (Bolton, 2003). The more hesitant attitudes amongst the American public became vindicated as the war lacked transparency and Saddam Hussein did not possess weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) (NBC, 2005). Additionally, the Iraq War's moral credibility became damaged through its human rights abuses such as the revelations of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal (CBS, 2004). Unlike in Afghanistan, the combination of the Iraq War's lack of transparency in its rationale, and the questionable moral grounds in addition to its protractedness, made many Americans disillusioned with its country's foreign policy approach towards military intervention. Consequently this prompted the attitudes that underlie the Vietnam Syndrome. The chapter will explain further how the Iraq War, elicited the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by exploiting the American public's fears to initiate a war of choice that was presented as necessary for national security.

The chapter consists of three sections. Firstly, it examines how the failures of the Iraq War created the conditions to provoke the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This section evaluates the shortcomings of the Wilsonian democratic peace theory which Bush advocated to partly justify the

war by reassuring the American public that it would be quick because the Iraqis would embrace democracy. During the first year of the war, Bush predicted that, "the establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution" (2003). Therefore, the Bush administration's unpreparedness to oversee a military occupation resulted in poor military and political decision-making that prompted an insurgency and resulted in a quagmire. The administration further destabilised Iraq through the 'de-Ba'athification' policy that prevented Iraqis associated with Saddam's Ba'ath Party from working to build a post-Saddam regime, causing animosity amongst Iraqi civilians towards the American military. Additionally, de-Ba'athification included the disbanding of the Iraqi military instead of cooperating with them to bring security and order. However, insufficient numbers of American troops to effectively occupy Iraq opened a security vacuum that provoked an insurgency amongst Sunni loyalists to Saddam, particularly from the disbanded army that were trained with weaponry.

Consequently, the US military became embroiled in asymmetric warfare and sectarian violence that caused an impasse similar to Vietnam. Furthermore, the Bush administration attempted to portray a more positive narrative publicly than the reality, as well as changing its rationale to be there, again replicating Vietnam, and thus aggravating the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This section will then discusses how the Vietnam War influenced military leaders in Iraq and proponents of the counterinsurgency tactics that led to the 2007 troop surge such as David Petraeus and H.R. McMaster. Petraeus believed that the lessons of Vietnam had detrimental effects towards foreign policymaking and interventionism because it encouraged short wars and leaving quickly. He argued that counterinsurgency and longer-term political engagement with local populations was needed in warfare to improve political stability which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome prevented (1987). Additionally, McMaster believed that the failures of the Vietnam War was due to a poor understanding of guerrilla warfare by the political leadership that he believed was needed to defeat the Viet Cong insurgency (1997). Nevertheless, the counterinsurgency and surge only improved the conditions in Iraq temporarily by reducing the fatality rate and security but did not bring a political resolution much closer (Ricks, 2008). This consequently fomented the conditions and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

The second section explains how a more introspective debate about the use of military intervention amongst Americans began that gave more legitimacy to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome during the failures of the Iraq War. It will compares and contrasts the key differences with the Vietnam era. In particular, the more introspective national mood allowed voices from the political left and right that encouraged a more restrained American foreign policy approach to be heard. This subsequently began to legitimise the debate about when to employ military intervention.

The more open debate contrasted with the Vietnam era's divisions that involved more violence, making the Iraq War a watershed moment in the role of US public opinion in foreign policymaking around intervention and establishing America's global role. It explains how the Iraq War became politically more significant than being another prolonged conflict. The war's rationale that Saddam was connected to 9/11, or possessed WMDs proved to be false. Instead it was an ideological war of choice rather than necessity, which Obama warned of before it began. This lack of transparency subsequently inflamed the sentiments of the Vietnam Syndrome and greater introspection about America's foreign policy approach.

The section then analyses how the revelations of human rights abuses by the US military undermined the Bush administration's moral argument that the war was being fought to spread democracy and freedom. Consequently, disillusion amongst Americans grew because of the war's misleading rationale, its morally compromised purpose, and its lack of an exit strategy, similar to the concerns that arose during the Vietnam War. This was reflected electorally, as the Iraq War became a main issue during the 2006 mid-terms. The growing distrust and caution amongst domestic public opinion towards America's foreign policy approach to military intervention. Furthermore, this section traces Obama's early opposition to the Iraq War and emphasis on healing the divisions it caused. This made him a unifying figure to help with America's reassessment of its foreign policy approach.

The final section discusses how Obama's consistent opposition to the Iraq War and his responsiveness to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome became an important asset to his presidential campaign. It studies the importance of the Iraq War in shaping Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that promised change by listening to public opinion and departing from Bush's unilateral military intervention and crusading democracy promotion (2007). Obama recognised how the Iraq War triggered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and he framed a lot of his campaign around his consistent opposition. Moreover, it explores how Obama combined messages of change through his opposition to the Iraq War with a more cautious Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that advocated multilateralism and considered domestic public opinion in response to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that galvanised support.

How Iraq became a 'Vietnam quagmire'

This section elaborates on how the Iraq War specifically created conditions to provoke the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through the Bush administration's military and political failures in Iraq. It critiques the shortcomings of democratic peace theory that influenced Bush's approach to the war and the military and political decision-making that fostered the environment to inflame the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

The Bush administration used a 'shock and awe' strategy for success in Iraq by utilising technological military capabilities with rapid and colossal power in the hope that this would overwhelm the enemy into surrender and create conditions for Iraq to democratise. To an extent, the Bush administration's focus on making technological weaponry central to its strategy to defeat its opponent addressed some of the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst public opinion to limit fatalities. Indeed it reflected the Jacksonian approach to warfare which holds two rules. "For the first Jacksonian rule of war is that wars must be fought with all available force. The use of limited force is deeply repugnant. Jacksonians see war as a switch that is either 'on' or 'off'…The second key concept in Jacksonian thought about war is that the strategic and tactical objective of American forces is to impose our will on the enemy with as few American casualties as possible" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.15). The trend towards technological warfare was growing before the 2003 Iraq War, and it became more prominent during the 1991 Gulf War as a way to address the lessons of the Vietnam War and manage public opinion (Gray, 1997:p.36). Nevertheless, the technological approach favoured by neoconservatives and 'Americanists' and Jacksonians such as Donald Rumsfeld reflected their interest in maximising American power with its most modern capabilities more than appealing to public opinion.

During the 2003 Iraq War:

The speed of the invasion was not simply a rejection of the gradualism and coercive model from Vietnam at the strategic level of political-military planning but was also a product of how wars should be fought at the operational (campaign) level and tactical level. The Iraq invasion showed that by having clear objectives and a clear start to hostilities it would be able to implement a new way of war developed since the Vietnam War (Lock-Pullan, 2007:p.72).

American forces indeed acted quickly, as they reached Baghdad only twenty-two days after the invasion began on March 20, thus ending Saddam's regime on April 9. The symbolic end to Saddam's regime came when Iraqis and US marines toppled his statue in Baghdad (2003). It is worth remembering the optimism amongst the advocates of the war during its early stages, especially the neoconservatives. This was demonstrated by the pro-war rally held in Washington D.C., days after Saddam's regime fell. Amongst the speakers was Bill Kristol, who predicted that the Iraq War would be such a success that it would quell the concerns amongst public opinion that are part of the Vietnam Syndrome. Kristol claimed that the Iraq War:

Has the potential to reverse a lot of the bad effects of Vietnam. After Vietnam, many Americans came to think that we couldn't be a force for good in the world, that our military would get bogged down if it fought abroad that we couldn't trust our civilian leadership to give the military

the tools they need. One of the great things that could come out of this war in addition to the liberation of Iraq and the removal of the threats of the weapons of mass destruction, is a restoration of confidence in America, in this great nation's ability to be a force for good in the world (2003).

The American public's national mood broadly mirrored Kristol's confidence and commitment to the war effort over a sustained period during its early stages. Seven-in-ten Americans favoured a major post-war operation to rebuild Iraq and establish a stable government at the end of April according to the Pew Research Center (2003). Moreover, there was even a belief amongst some neoconservatives that Iraq was only the beginning of America implementing regime-change and democracy in the Middle East. Michael Ledeen, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, who also reportedly advised Bush's Senior Advisor, Karl Rove (BBC, 2003), said that the Iraq War was only the beginning of removing other hostile regimes. He claimed that "I believe that if the tyrants are removed that there'll be a great deal more peace and chances for peace in the Middle East…Iran, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia are the big four and then there's Libya"(BBC, 2003).

Ledeen exemplified how much more radical the George W. Bush administration and its supporters were in their approach towards democracy promotion than Reagan. Reagan also proactively fostered democracy, as he stated in his 1985 State of the Union Address that, "our mission is to nourish and defend freedom and democracy, and to communicate these ideals everywhere we can" (1985). Nevertheless, as previously discussed in the second chapter, this was often done through proxies, including those that lacked democratic credentials. In contrast, the neoconservative advocates of the Iraq War believed that America should directly prevent threats before they could even develop and build friendly democratic regimes with a bottom up approach through military intervention. "Unlike proponents of rollback, who never succeeded in overcoming the argument that their policies would produce World War III, Bush based his policy on the belief that nobody could push back" (Daalder& Lindsay, 2005:p.14).

This approach reflected the neoconservatives' faith in democratic peace theory. As mentioned in chapter two, the theory posits that democracies are less likely to go to war against each other which therefore increases global peace. However, the concept that states are peaceful between each other because they are democracies is questionable, as there can be other underlying factors. Realists argue that "common interests rather than common polities explain the post-1945 democratic peace" (Farber & Gowa, 1997:p.394) that enhances the self-preservation of the state. Geographical distances can also be a more important reason that states are at peace rather than their democratic nature (Worley, 2012).

Correlation does not of course imply causation, and democracies can be at peace for multiple reasons, making it difficult to definitively prove this is because of its politics. The Bush administration mistakenly believed that democracy itself leads to peace and had hoped that Iraqis would embrace it through coercion from an external actor. However, other challenges such as securitising the warzone, building economic stability, and addressing sectarian tensions were probably more important to bringing peace than democracy. This led to a post-war occupation that the Bush administration was unprepared for because as part of their strategy to allay public opinion, they hope that Iraq would democratise itself. Consequently, the Bush administration's errors resulted in a military quagmire and political failures that later inflamed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically.

Although there was some optimism in America and Iraq after deposing Saddam, the Bush administration had not prepared to occupy Iraq and subsequently needed to politically reconstruct the country. Indeed Bush symbolised American hubris and the belief that removing Saddam had brought the war to a near conclusion by declaring on May 1 an end to major combat operations under a banner saying, 'mission accomplished' (2003). The pseudo-cinematic event in which Bush arrived in a fighter-jet wearing a flight suit was likely signalling to a domestic public audience that the war had finished in triumphant fashion whereby America had defeated the villain. This portrayal of the war was successfully conveyed to the public as 93% believed that it was going well, according to the Pew Research Center shortly after the speech (2007). However, the situation on the ground in Iraq was different. Waleed Nesyif, an Iraqi who helped Western journalists as a translator, described the descent into instability and violence post-Saddam:

That was the time again when people started questioning. It was like, ok well, since mission is accomplished and everything is good right now, when is security going to be there, because there is no security… people started taking matters within their own hands, right, so for instance, security started being imposed by the people of the neighbourhood. Everybody had a gun…simple things are what we were asking for. Very simple, dignity, electricity, and semblance of security. These things, had they happened, Iraqis would not have reacted in the way they did to the American army (BBC, 2020).

Instead, the Bush administration exacerbated the post-war difficulties through the de-Ba'athification policy, carried out by the Presidential Envoy and Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Paul Bremer. De-Ba'athification was modelled on de-Nazification when the Allied powers occupied Germany and reconstructed the authoritarian state into a democracy, which Bremer aimed to replicate in Iraq. A month before the Iraq War began, Bush cited Germany and

Japan as being examples of undemocratic regimes that were democratised that could be replicated in Iraq. He stated, "there was a time when many said that the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong. Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken.". (2003). However, de-Ba'athification resulted in two decisions that would incite an insurgency against the US military and create a quagmire that resulted in increased American fatalities. Bremer's first misjudgement was Order Number 1 as part of the de-Ba'athification that stated, "full members of the Ba`ath Party holding the ranks of 'Udw Qutriyya (Regional Command Member), 'Udw Far' (Branch Member). 'Udw Shu'bah (Section Member), and 'Udw Firqah (Group Member) (together, "Senior Party Members") are hereby removed from their positions and banned from future employment in the public sector" (2003). However, the removal of civil servants, doctors, and teachers dismantled any institutional structures that provided some orderliness and basic services.

Moreover, unlike Germany post-World War Two, which had some foundations of democracy during the Weimar Republic between 1918 and 1933, modern Iraq had none as a state. From its inception, Iraq largely functioned under multiple oppressive top-down political systems under British colonialism, the Iraqi monarchy, the Iraqi Republic, and Ba'athism. Therefore, the institutions of civil society deemed necessary for the initial emergence of democracy rarely have existed in Iraq and they struggled to develop beyond anything but a superficial measure in a post-Saddam Iraqi society (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004:p.190). Gareth Stansfield explains that "ironically, by removing the Ba'ath Party, the United States effectively eliminated the one organization that could perhaps claim a national support base and had the means to project power (at least among the Arab population, if not with the Kurds) (2005:p.141). Consequently the US military ostracised large parts of the local population instead of building cooperation.

The second error by the Bush administration was twofold. First, it did not deploy enough troops for a lengthy occupation to achieve its aim of having a 'light footprint'. Bremer's Order Number 2 to disband the Iraqi army as part of de-Ba'athification, further destabilised post-Saddam Iraq. The possibility of preventing or limiting the scale of the post-Saddam security vacuum was undermined by the Bush administration's refusal to cooperate with the Iraqi army whilst having insufficient American troops to occupy Iraq alone. On October 15, 2002, Rumsfeld circulated a memo around the Pentagon titled, 'Iraq: An Illustrative List of Potential Problems to be Considered and Addressed', which included warnings that the "US could fail to manage post-Saddam Hussein Iraq successfully" (2002). He also acknowledged that the occupation and war could last much longer than what the Bush administration were publicly claiming. Rumsfeld wrote, "rather than having the post-Saddam effort require 2 to 4 years, it could take 8 to 10 years, thereby absorbing US leadership,

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military and financial resources" (Ibid). However, the day after this memo, the war was authorised by Congress through the 2002 Iraq Resolution and Rumsfeld prepared for war without raising these concerns again. Instead, Rumsfeld implemented the 'shock and awe' strategy which relied on technological superiority rather than high numbers of troops to win the war and the assumption that Iraqis would democratise the country themselves post-Saddam. "The reliance on technology is enhanced by the Vietnam legacy of casualties, where it became a public index of American failure" (Lock-Pullan, 2006:p.74).

Shock and awe achieved its initial objectives of limiting fatalities and defeating the enemy quickly, as many Iraqi soldiers surrendered rather than fought. However, as well as Iraq lacking the political foundations to democratise itself, Rumsfeld ignored concerns that he had previously considered himself about scale of the challenge to stabilise a post-Saddam Iraq. Middle East scholars from the National Defense University, prior to the invasion warned "that occupying Iraq 'will be the most daunting and complex task the US and the international community will have undertaken since the end of World War II'- a sweeping statement that placed a war with Iraq in the class of the Vietnam War" (Ricks, 2006:p.72). Rumsfeld also rejected the advice from his Director for Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lieutenant General Gregory Newbold to follow the OPLAN 1003-98. It recommended that 500,000 troops was needed for the Iraq War and contingency planning. However, "as Newbold outlined the plan...it was clear that Rumsfeld was growing increasingly irritated. For Rumsfeld, the plan required too many troops and supplies and took far too long to execute" (Gordon & Trainor, 2007:p.44). Instead, Rumsfeld originally only wanted 125,000 soldiers (Margolick, 2007), though the invasion itself deployed approximately 250,000. This was nonetheless half of the recommended amount, with the coalition forces bringing the overall number above 300,000 (2005). It was considerably smaller than the approximate 697,000 troops deployed in the 1991 Gulf War, which had the more straightforward objective of removing the Iraqi army from Kuwait (1999).

Rumsfeld dismissed the misgivings of Middle East policy analysts and his military advisors in the Pentagon regarding the scale of troops needed to unilaterally stabilise Iraq. This materialised through the de-Ba'athification strategy that led to counterintuitive objectives whereby the Bush administration wanted to largely control Iraq's post-Saddam political reconstruction by marginalising his acolytes and using few resources such as US troops, time, and finances. Bremer issued "Order Number 2, Dissolution of Iraqi Entities, formally doing away with several groups: the Iraqi armed forces, which accounted for 385,000 people; the staff of the Ministry of the Interior, which amounted to a surprisingly high 285,000 people, because it included the police and domestic security forces; and the presidential security units, a force of some 50,000" (Ricks, 2006:p.162). Consequently, American troops could not stabilise due to insufficient numbers, and were left vulnerable against an

aggrieved disbanded Iraqi army triggered an insurgency by professional military soldiers that knew the landscape better than its American occupiers. Therefore, "the demobilization of the national army, similarly, eradicated the most capable of organizations available to post-Saddam Iraq and allowed a security vacuum to develop which has proved impossible to fill. It also flooded the 'Iraqi street' with thousands of trained, armed and, most importantly, disgruntled soldiers" (Stansfield, 2005:p.141).

Ironically, Rumsfeld showed had some concerns about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by lowering US fatalities, albeit, through the desire to enhance American power technologically, rather than acknowledging public opinion. Nevertheless, the insufficient number of troops compounded the post-Saddam challenges of stabilising Iraq that subsequently created a quagmire that fertilised the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically. Far from the conditions in which Iraqi civilians and soldiers greeted the US military as liberators like the Bush administration told the American public would, there was a sense of shame. Memories of Western colonialism surfaced, especially as Britain was an occupying partner.

Judith Yaphe observed that, "when the Arabs of southern Iraq saw the American and coalition forces enter Iraq in March 2003, it must have been with a curious sense of déjà vu" (2003:p.381). The occupation provoked deep-rooted Iraqi nationalism amongst ex-servicemen, which Saddam had espoused during his rule. This had parallels with Vietnam as Professor Gerard DeGroot explained that "Vietnam was in fact a nationalist struggle, a civil war between two sides with competing visions for their country. For most of the war, the real enemy of the United States was not communists from the North, but indigenous Southern insurgents who rejected the government in Saigon precisely because it was affiliated with the United States" (2013). Furthermore, resentment amongst the Muslim Sunni population grew against the occupation because they previously received better treatment under Saddam and had become disempowered through de-Ba'athification. This simultaneously aggravated sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shias which had largely been contained under Saddam's tyrannical rule. Rumsfeld's list of 'potential problems' when planning the Iraq War became prescient as the US military could not manage post-Saddam Iraq. Furthermore, it took closer to 8 to 10 years to stabilise post-Saddam Iraq at a great cost of military and financial resources.

Early into the occupation, the US military struggled against a growing insurgency, and its tactics of using car bombs and improvised explosive devices such as roadside bombs. There were early warnings that America could become dragged into a protracted conflict akin to Vietnam. General Anthony Zinni, a Vietnam veteran, originally supported Bush in the 2000 election and served

as a Special Envoy for Middle East. However, he resigned in March 2003, shortly before the Iraq War, and early into the occupation, stated that, "my contemporaries, our feelings and sensitivities were forged on the battlefields of Vietnam, where we heard the garbage and lies, and we saw the sacrifice. We swore never again would we allow that to happen. I ask you, is it happening again"? (Ricks, 2006:p.242). Although fighting in urban conditions in Iraq was different to the jungles of Vietnam, the American military experienced similar problems (Boot, 2013). They did not know the landscape as well as their adversaries or even how to identify them because insurgents were not uniformed and could blend into the civilian population. Consequently, as the US military suffered more fatalities, it increasingly acted aggressively towards Iraqis indiscriminately because they did not know who were insurgents, thus exposing them to danger.

Lieutenant Nathan Sassaman, who led the unit controlling the town Abu Hishma, acknowledged that "things got real draconian…it was more like just punishment and retribution for the attacks that they had been committing on American forces" (2020). This involved the US military cordoning off villages with barbed wire to restrict civilians' movement, the introduction of identification cards and curfews, as well as conducting night raids across Iraq. These actions made Iraqis feel humiliated rather than liberated. As DeGroot noted, "legitimacy, or rather the lack of it, surely explains why Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan did not go as planned. Americans thought they were defending freedom, but their adversaries saw instead—neo-colonial interlopers" (2013). Consequently, relations between the US military and Iraqis in the general population deteriorated. Moreover, the New York Times journalist, Dexter Filkins, who covered the Iraq War on the ground highlighted that Iraq is "a society in which you are obligated to avenge a wrong or a humiliation…Anyone who was not a member of the insurgency when you went into that village would sure as hell be a member of the insurgency by the time you left" (2020).

The sense that the US army was engulfed by a conflict without a clear end solidified in late 2004 during the Second Battle of Fallujah. American public support for the Iraq War had already begun to decline to 39% (Coe, 2012) in June 2004, when it became apparent that it was becoming bogged down. This was despite the US transferring sovereignty to the new Iraqi government (Guardian, 2004). The fighting in Fallujah that took place in urban conditions against insurgents in the guerrilla warfare had raised the spectre of Vietnam. For context, Fallujah became a hotbed for anti-Americanism when the occupation began as it was part of the Sunni Triangle that had received better treatment under the Saddam regime. They blamed the increased violence on the Americans and chanted that "America is the enemy of God" (BBC, 2003). In light of its media coverage, Rumsfeld dismissed comparisons to Vietnam, retorting, "press people are saying, 'Is it Vietnam yet?' hoping it is and wondering if it is. And it isn't. It's a different time. It's a different era. It's a different place"

(2003). The Fist Battle of Fallujah took place in April until May 2004, during which American private contractors were ambushed by a car bomb and their corpses were filmed and hanged (2004). More significantly, the first battle was one of the first indications that the insurgency had grown from predominantly being supporters of Saddam to becoming a group that al-Qaeda was able to exploit to enter the conflict from bordering countries. The insurgency in Fallujah became led by the Jordanian Jihadist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi "who emerged as the most famous anti-Coalition commander in Iraq" (Head, 2013:p.38), and established al-Qaeda there.

By the time the US military was preparing for the Second Battle of Fallujah, al-Zarqawi had assembled nearly 5,000 non-Iraqi insurgents alone (Lowry, 2010:p.20). Although the US military warned civilians to evacuate the city prior to the battle with leaflets (Estes, 2011:p.60), some lacked the financial means to be able to (Gott, 2007:p.309). Therefore, it was unclear to the US military who the insurgents were during the fighting and the Red Cross estimated that 800 civilians were killed (2004). Furthermore, guerrilla tactics used by the insurgents such as hiding in residential buildings that were dispersed across the city, made it difficult for US soldiers to know which direction to attack. Ashley Gilbertson, a photographer for the New York Times, who covered the war and the Second Battle of Fallujah, recalled that, "I saw so many marines go down, but I never saw an insurgent. Like I never saw an insurgent alive with a gun. They were ghosts" (BBC, 2020). Consequently, the Second Battle of Fallujah exemplified a shift in the war whereby America was unable to contain its enemy in asymmetric warfare. This evoked memories of the Vietnam morass amongst the soldiers. Lieutenant General, John F. Sattler and Lieutenant General Daniel Wilson recalled that, "the fighting was intense, close, and personal, the likes of which has been experienced on just a few occasions since the battle of Hue City in the Vietnam War" (2005).

In addition to the Iraq War becoming a quagmire, the Bush administration further inflamed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by failing to be transparent about its progress and responsiveness to public opinion about the war. Instead the Bush administration gave a different narrative to the public about the war's progress before admitting problems later. Rumsfeld for example, banned Pentagon personnel from using the term 'insurgents' to describe the enemy. He claimed that they were "a group of people who don't merit the word" and should instead be called the "enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government" (2005) that were merely loyalists to Saddam. However, downplaying the threat of the insurgency contradicted military intelligence, as Colonel Derek Harvey, the expert on Iraq, warned in late 2004 that the insurgency was "robust, it's well led, it's diverse. Absent of some sort of reconciliation it's going to go on, and that risks a civil war" (Ricks, 2006:p.408). Additionally, the retired Army General Gary Luck was sent to Iraq to assess the war's progress and reported back to Bush in February 2005 "that the security situation was worse than was

being depicted, the insurgency was gathering steam" (p.409). Nevertheless, Bush took little action to address the threat, and "would take many months before his public comments began to reflect this more sober assessment" (Ibid). This shared similarities with the credibility gap during the Vietnam War under Lyndon B. Johnson. Andrew Priest argued that with regards to Johnson and his management of the Vietnam War, and public opinion that "the public ultimately did not turn against the war itself but rather the president, his policies, and the way he had so clearly misled them"(2010:p.52). In the Iraq War, a credibility gap emerged even quicker compared to the Vietnam War on the progress of the conflict since it had lasted for years rather than weeks as the Bush administration claimed it would before the invasion, partly to reassure domestic public opinion. Bob Woodward's third book about the Bush administration claimed that "there's public (information) and there's private. But what did they do with the private? They stamp it secret. No one is supposed to know" (2006). This solidified the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as public opinion had waned by September 2005, with 59% of Americans believing that sending troops into Iraq was a mistake (Gallup).

Bush attempted to remobilise public support for the war by arguing that its cause remained justified with a strategy to encourage them to "stay the course" (Melanson, 2006:p.62). However, the change in the war's original purpose only solidified growing attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. In 2005, Bush appointed Peter D. Feaver as a Special Advisor for strategic planning and institutional reform, a professor in public opinion at Duke University. Feaver went against the orthodoxy that US casualties decrease public support for war, as research by John Mueller has argued (1973). Feaver believed that if the public believed that there was a conflict had worthy cause, and crucially, that it would succeed, then support could be regained (2005). Through Feaver's influence, Bush reiterated in October 2005 the need to defeat radical Islam in Iraq, comparing it to Communism, stating that, "Like the ideology of Communism, our new enemy pursues totalitarian aims…We will not relent until the organized international terror networks are exposed and broken" (2005).

Incidentally, both Mueller and Feaver acknowledged the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome but focused on different aspects. Mueller focused on fatalities, whilst Feaver tried to communicate the war's purpose to justify the fatalities. However, Feaver's approach was undermined by the fact that the public rationale had changed from finding WMDs and democratising Iraq (neither of which were achieved), to fighting Islamic terrorism, making its purpose inconsistent with the earlier claims. Additionally, the fighting of Islamic terrorism was aggravated by the invasion itself, as it was fairly contained under Saddam's secular regime before the invasion. Although allegations had been made that Saddam had links to al-Qaeda, he did not, and his removal strengthened the group through creating a security vacuum. Moreover, Bush "rarely levelled with the public to explain what he was

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doing and what should be expected…The president was rarely a voice of realism on the Iraq War" (Woodward, 2008). This was demonstrated when Harvey's warning of a sectarian civil war materialised in 2006, and the lack of transparency about the progress of the war further created the political environment to provoke the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Sectarian violence led to the troop surge and more effective counterinsurgency operation in 2007 that focused on winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis. Counterinsurgency prioritises supporting local populations over territorial gains by working to stabilise a warzone, but military strategists and theorists have found it difficult to define. In 1962, Major General Victor Krulak, Special Assistant Joint Chiefs of Staff for Counterinsurgency quoted the White Queen from 'Alice in Wonderland' stating, "what does it mean? Why, it means what I mean it to mean" (1962). Counterinsurgency has defined goals as something that "can be achieved only with the support of the population. If it is relatively easy to disperse and to expel the insurgent forces from a given area by purely military action, if it is possible to destroy the insurgent political organizations by intensive police action, it is impossible to prevent the return of the guerrilla units and the rebuilding of the political cells unless the population cooperates" (Galula, 1964:p.55).

The counterinsurgency operation in Iraq led by General David Petraeus through the troop surge between January 2007 and July 2008 had some success. Average monthly US military fatalities was around 100 and 700 by August 2006 and this decreased between June 2008 and June 2011 to 11 fatalities per month (2011). Petraeus believed that US counterinsurgency strategies were underdeveloped because of the 'lessons of Vietnam' paradigm. His doctoral dissertation was titled, 'The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era' (1987). He argued that the lessons of Vietnam encouraged an approach to intervention that focused too heavily on the military objective of having an exit strategy, which neglected a plan to build political stability. "Counterinsurgency operations in particular, require close civil-military cooperation. Unfortunately, this requirement runs counter to the traditional desire, reaffirmed in the lessons of Vietnam to operate autonomously and resist political meddling and micromanagement in operational concerns" (1986:p.48). Similarly, one of Petraeus's counterinsurgency advisors, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster was influenced by the Vietnam War and its legacy. His book, 'Dereliction of Duty' (1997), which criticised President Lyndon B. Johnson and his advisors and their lack of understanding of guerrilla warfare rather than public opinion. McMaster stated:

The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of The New York Times, or on the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C., even before Americans

assumed sole responsibility for the fighting in 1965 and before they realized the country was at war…
(It was) a uniquely human failure, the responsibility for which was shared by President Johnson and
his principal military and civilian advisors (1997:p.162).

The Iraq counterinsurgency strategy attempted to rebuff 'the lessons of Vietnam', by changing the paradigm, whereby "no longer was Vietnam held up as an example of why the US should not engage in counterinsurgency warfare, but it was mined for examples of how to conduct counterinsurgency". (Fitzgerald, 2010:p.159). Instead, Petraeus and McMaster believed the key decisions to bringing military success is not through knowing when to fight wars based on the international and domestic support, (which the Powell Doctrine stressed), but by knowing how to fight the enemy. Although fatalities in Iraq decreased after the surge its responsibility to this outcome was itself contested, with the Sunni Awakening, which involved Sunni tribes building resistance against al-Qaeda with US support being mostly credited (Rubin & Cave, 2007). Petraeus's counterinsurgency advisor, David, Kilcullen, also said that "the tribal revolt was arguably the most significant change in the Iraqi operating environment in several years" (2009:p.179). The surge therefore reflected moderate achievements of the counterinsurgency operation through the US miliary building cooperation with local population. Nevertheless, "for explaining why this reduction in violence took place, the evidence suggests that the surge, though necessary, was insufficient and that an interaction between it and the Awakening offers the strongest explanation" (Biddle, Jeffrey & Shapiro, 2012:p.36), but this still did not achieve long-term political stability. Ricks underlined the existing problem that, "Petraeus found tactical success—that is, improved security—but not the clear political breakthrough that would have meant unambiguous strategic success…Nor was that really the goal anymore, though no one had said so publicly" (2009:p.8).

Similarly to the 1968 Tet Offensive, the 2007 Iraq surge was a partial US miliary success on the battlefield, but a political defeat domestically. The verdict about the war had been made regardless of how successful the counterinsurgency was. "The percentage of the American public finding intervention in Iraq to have been a mistake, when around 1,500 Americans had been killed, was about the same as in Vietnam at the time of the 1968 Tet Offensive, when about 20,000 American soldiers had died" (Mueller, 2005:p.45). By June 2006, 62% of Americans said that the war was not worth the loss of American life, according to CBS News (2006). Though the number is much smaller in Iraq, it may suggest that the American public regarded the purpose of a war itself needing to remain clear before even beginning to consider how high a fatality rate is tolerable. As McCrisken notes about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome during the Vietnam War, "the costs of the war— essentially, the sacrifices being made—must be considered worthy of the cause at stake" (2012:p.1000) and a parallel development with Iraq surfaced.

Consequently, throughout 2007 the highest amount of the American public that believed that the surge improved the situation was 40%, improving only to 48% by mid-2008 (Gallup). Though Bush was not seeking re-election like Johnson during Vietnam, who withdrew from the 1968 Democratic primaries, the perception of the Iraq War was negative amongst public opinion like Vietnam. By January 2007, 61% of Americans opposed the war compared to 36% supporting it and 60% opposed the troop surge in February (Gallup). Moreover, the top four reasons given for their opposition were: firstly, that it was unjustified, secondly that false pretences got them involved, thirdly that there were too many deaths, and fourthly, that it had gone on for too long and become another Vietnam (Ibid). All of these reasons fit the criteria to indicate that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had been provoked.

The development of the Vietnam Syndrome attitudes domestically during the Iraq War

This section will investigate how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst the American public triggered by the failures of the Iraq War were less divisive and more focused than the response to the Vietnam War. It will explain how the revelations of such a basic lack of transparency in the Iraq War through Saddam Hussein being unconnected to 9/11 and al-Qaeda, as well as not possessing WMDs caused public support to evaporate far quicker than the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War at least had a more clear and present enemy in the form of Communism. Additionally, public support was badly particularly damaged by the moral hypocrisy of America's conduct during the Iraq War. Furthermore, the lack of entrenched domestic cultural division caused by the Iraq War compared to the Vietnam War meant that public support, and perhaps just as equally, attention, somewhat evaporated. The Vietnam War era saw many films during and after the conflict being made that shaped public opinion towards it and its legacy. In contrast, whilst films were made about the Iraq War, it was nothing like the same number made, nor did show as much detail about the conflict specifically, and the effect on the United States, when conveying oppositional or supportive views which will be explored.

Although there was the largest anti-war protest in history worldwide before the invasion, protests during the war were more sporadic. There were some large anti-war protests, notably during the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York which was attended by nearly half a million (Raymer, Faber & Khan, 2004). One protestor included a Vietnam veteran, Tim Teater, who claimed that "we haven't had this kind of polarization in this country since Vietnam" (Ibid). Protests during the Iraq War were less frequent, but they were more peaceful, and therefore brought more focus on changing in America's foreign policy approach compared to those against the Vietnam War. Conversely, as the Vietnam War continued, anti-war protests overlapped with other domestic

divisions over racism and civil rights, especially as African-Americans were affected by the draft, but could not enjoy equal freedoms at home. The draft brought the Vietnam War closer to home, and provoked dramatic protests, particularly amongst university students. Many Americans had moral objections to the Vietnam War, but nonetheless, they were also motivated by self-interest to avoid risking their lives. Furthermore, the draft meant that the Vietnam War affected everyday life of Americans in terms of family and friends having many more loved ones involved in the war. This made it far likelier that Americans knew fallen soldiers that returned in body-bags, and heard stories from survivors about the war from people they knew. The higher emotions between the young and rebellious counterculture movement in response to the war, resulted in violent scenes during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and in other incidents, some protestors were killed by the authorities such as in the 1970 Kent University shooting (Reed, 1970). In contrast, the draft was not a factor during the Iraq War since it ended in 1973, which meant that broader US society was not as directly affected, which allowed many Americans to be more detached from the conflict because only voluntary professional soldiers fought. Consequently, "there was no mass anti-Iraq War movement that periodically brought hundreds of thousands" (Small, 2010:p.543) after it had begun. Some police violence did occur in protests against the Iraq War, and one incident, resulted in an $18 million settlement for the detaining of protestors in poor conditions (Pilkington, 2014). However, although America was divided by the Iraq War, and racism remained a political issue despite improvements since civil rights, the less volatile atmosphere perhaps allowed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to be more focused on reforming its foreign policy approach.

The revelations about the lack of transparency of the Iraq War's rationale began to trigger the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, but this time, a more nuanced domestic and less emotive debate about military intervention, at least relative to the Vietnam War. The first of these was the discrediting of the claims that Saddam and Iraq had links to al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks. During Bush's 'mission accomplished' speech, he declared that "the liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We have removed an ally of al-Qaeda and cut off a source of terrorist funding" (2003). In retrospect, this claim were always easy to debunk considering that Saddam and his secular regime was known to be an enemy with al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, during the panic surrounding 9/11 that subsequently led to the War on Terror and Iraq War, the Bush administration undoubtedly exploited this belief as demonstrated. Even during the first year of the war and occupation, as much as 69% of Americans believed that Saddam was linked to 9/11 (2003). John Mueller explained that "it's very easy to picture Saddam as a demon. You get a general fuzz going around: People know they don't like al-Qaeda, they are horrified by September 11th, they know this guy is a bad guy, and it's not hard to put those things together" (Ibid).

The Bush administration perpetrated the idea that al-Qaeda was linked to Saddam in the Secretary of State, Colin Powell's presentation to the UN to make the case for war. Powell was regarded as a more credible voice who could emphasise the supposed urgency for the need to invade Iraq because he was cautious towards military intervention. During his speech, which was written by the Vice President, Dick Cheney, Powell claimed that Iraq was harbouring the al-Qaeda member, al-Zarqawi, who later established the organisation after the invasion which worsened the conflict. Additionally, it included falsehoods that Saddam was linked to al-Qaeda. Powell stated that:

Ambition and hatred are enough to bring Iraq and al-Qaeda together, enough so al-Qaeda could learn how to build more sophisticated bombs and learn how to forge documents, and enough so that al-Qaeda could turn to Iraq for help in acquiring expertise on weapons of mass destruction. And the record of Saddam Hussein's cooperation with other Islamist terrorist organizations is clear (2003).

However, the allegation that Saddam and al-Qaeda were linked was later discredited by Bush's counter-terrorism chief, Richard Clarke, after he left office in 2003. In his memoir, Clarke concluded that instead of weakening the terror group, "we invaded Iraq and gave al-Qaeda exactly the kind of propaganda victory it needed" (2004:p.273). Similarly, Jeffrey Record, from the Strategic Studies Institute argued that:

Of particular concern has been the conflation of al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a single, undifferentiated terrorist threat…The result has been an unnecessary preventive war of choice against a deterred Iraq that has created a new front in the Middle East for Islamic terrorism and diverted attention and resources away from securing the American homeland against further assault by an undeterrable al-Qaeda (2003).

The unfounded connection between Saddam and al-Qaeda was not the sole catalyst for the decline of support for the Iraq War and the eliciting of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Nevertheless, it began to open up the debate about how much the Iraq War was a war of choice rather than necessity. This began to shift the debate about the war which in some respects had higher stakes than Vietnam because it was presented as a war of direct self-defence in the immediate post-9/11 political atmosphere. By 2004, the election year between Bush and the senator for Massachusetts, and Vietnam veteran, John Kerry, support for the purpose of the war began to decrease, with only 20% of Americans believing that Iraq was responsible for 9/11 (Gershkoff & Kushner, 2005:p.533).

Kerry was not the only the anti-war Democrat during the primaries. Howard Dean was consistently opposed it from the start, whilst Kerry originally supported the Iraq Resolution, albeit saying that Bush needed more international support to invade. Nonetheless, Kerry made his opposition to the Iraq War central to his campaign and the Vietnam War somewhat coincidentally became a significant subject. Kerry attempted to use his record as a veteran of the Vietnam War positively, by arguing that he served his country in battle, unlike Bush who served in the Texas Air National Guard at home. Furthermore, as somebody who became a vocal critic of the Vietnam War when he returned, Kerry tried to convey that in addition to serving his country, he had the judgement to know when war was the wrong decision. However, Bush's campaign attacked Kerry's military record, putting himself in a peculiar position as a hawkish conservative president by discrediting a decorated veteran:

Swift Boat Veterans (high-profile critics of candidate Senator John Kerry's war record), Kerry's three Vietnam Purple Hearts, Bush's apparent neglect of his National Guard duties in 1972: these debates generated far more heat than light, but they illustrated forcefully the extent to which the new Middle East conflict had reignited memories of the earlier Indochinese one...Kerry, and key figures (like Senator Joe Biden and Richard Holbrooke) associated with his foreign policy campaign, also began about a revival of a 'Vietnam Syndrome' in post-Iraq invasion conditions (Dumbrell, 2006:p.215).*

Nevertheless, the Iraq War damaged, Bush's campaign rather than strengthened it, with 39% of Kerry voters naming their position on Iraq as the main reason behind their vote. This was nearly double than the second reason, which was the economy at 21% according to the Pew Research Center (2004). This refutes arguments made by diversionary war theorists that leaders search for conflict against "out-groups" to strengthen cohesion with "in-groups" (Coser, 1964). As discussed, the neoconservatives had deep-rooted motives behind the Iraq War, who actively demonised detractors, rather than build public cohesion for electoral gain. The Bush administration did attempt to mitigate the negative effects of the Iraq War amongst public opinion in an election year by transferring sovereignty to the Iraqi Governing Council. This was exemplified by the fact that in a "meeting with the U.K Foreign Secretary, Condoleezza Rice outlined a further rough plan and 'sought our agreement for a transfer of power to an interim Iraq government as early as 1 July 2004 in order to move it well clear of the presidential election campaign" (Payne, 2023:p.153 & Greenstock, 2016:p.327-30). Additionally, the lieutenant general, Ricardo Sanchez, similarly claimed that "giving Iraq sovereignty by the first of July would create the illusion that significant progress was being made, it would also provide a full four months for voters to be convinced through the media that America's mission in Iraq had been a success" (2008:p.288)

Bush was narrowly re-elected by 35 electoral votes, the smallest margin for an incumbent since Woodrow Wilson in 1916, as the result reflected a divided nation. Therefore, the 2004 election indicated that the legitimacy of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were growing in the debate about America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention. The Democrat's adoption of an anti-Iraq War stance shortly after it began through Kerry's candidacy probably prevented possible widespread violence amongst the public by providing a political party to channel its opposition. The Democratic Party began to consider public opinion more in US foreign policymaking after most Democratic Congresspeople voted for the war.

This contrasted from the Vietnam era when both parties supported the war, making it harder for anti-war activists to voice their frustration other than through mass protests, which ultimately descended into violence. Lyndon B. Johnson's Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford stated that Vietnam hawks "were greatly aided by the anti-war movement in the US, much of which took an ugly, unpatriotic and anti-American tone" (1991). Foreign policy hawks were able to blame the domestic opposition for the war's failure instead of beginning a more introspective re-evaluation about America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention. Therefore, for all the idealism and progressivism behind the anti-Vietnam War movement, it ended with Richard Nixon as president. During the Iraq War however, whilst Kerry lost, this similar section of the American public was able to rally around a political party that had better political organisation and national profile to channel their concerns more effectively compared to the Vietnam War era. Therefore, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome became more legitimate, especially on the centre-left. There was a brief presidential campaign by the paleoconservative Ron Paul in 2008, promoting non-interventionism but it had little electoral traction. Furthermore, Jacksonians were among the American public who had been the strongest critics of the anti-Vietnam War protests. Some even fought protestors on the streets, exemplified by the 1970 Hard Hat Riot, when construction workers confronted anti-war students in New York with signs including, "America, love it or leave it" (Khun, 2020:p.189) However, Jacksonians did not show the same staunch defence of the Iraq War, as it was clear by 2008 that it had failed.

Consequently, more political space opened for a deeper introspective debate about America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention that had not been explored as much during the Cold War or the subsequent unipolar moment. This development did not occur immediately after the invasion. However, as the Iraq War became a failure and politically unpopular, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst public opinion began to legitimise in debate about military intervention. The framing of the debate changed from being either interventionist or non-interventionist, or as seen during the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, being pro-American or anti-

American, to establishing the question of when military intervention should be used. Analysis about distinguishing caution towards intervention from being symptomatic with isolationism (a term frequently used in derogatory terms in US foreign policy debate), began to surface and how the debate is more complex:

Rather than signifying substantive debate in post-Cold War US foreign policy, the frequent and indiscriminate use of the 'i' word in matters of international policy has the effect of oversimplifying and stigmatising criticism of the prevailing international ort without actually having to engage those criticisms on their merit. By resort to the 'i' word, the voices of dissent can quickly and conclusively be categorised as on the parameters of the acceptable policy options and thus the debate (Dunn, 2005:p.243)

Dunn criticised the malleable application of isolationism. Even Bush's military unilateralism was derided as isolationist by the Senate Majority leader, Tom Daschle, who claimed that "we are isolating ourselves and in so isolating ourselves, I think we are minimizing ourselves" (2001). However, as Dunn retorted that, "to be isolated internationally is not the same as isolationism. For the US in fact, its isolation from international opinion often the result of its international actions rather than its inaction as the recent invasion of Iraq demonstrates" (2005:p.247). Dunn also highlighted John Dumbrell's argument that "multilateralism can also be isolationist" (1999:p.30), who cited the Clinton administration's apparent dependence on the assent of allies as a condition of its international engagement. Dumbrell however, conflates restraint, or even conditional multilateral intervention with isolationism. Dunn counters Dumbrell, arguing that "to label US participation in an internationally formed policy of multilateral restraint as 'potentially isolationist', as Dumbrell does, risks the danger of confusing internationalism with interventionism, and conversely non-interventionism with isolationism. Such logic was partly responsible for leading the US into war in Vietnam"(2005:p.247). There are alternative multilateral measures to intervention such as diplomatic treaties or multinational sanctions which isolationists would rarely participate in. Therefore, the Iraq War's failures that provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst public opinion began to encourage more debate about how and when military intervention should be used. Greater critical analysis developed by discussing intervention in more detail rather than labelling restraint as isolationism and intervention as internationalism.

Another breach of transparency with the American public concerning the Iraq War that was more significant was the revelation that Saddam did not possess WMDs. This was the Bush administration's main rationale for the war, which created a sense of urgency to galvanise support by portraying Saddam as an imminent threat. The CIA Director, George Tenet had said before the

invasion that it was "a slam dunk case" (Woodward, 2004:p.249) that Saddam had WMDs. The nonexistence of WMDs in Iraq, which was the original rationale for the war that the UN expressed scepticism towards prior to the invasion, meant that the war had even less transparent foundations than the Vietnam War. Whether one agreed with the Vietnam War and its necessity, its original purpose to contain Communism was relatively clear by fighting the North Vietnamese People's Army of Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara testified to Congress in 1962 that the conflict was intended avoid direct military involvement. He stated that, "to introduce white forces—US forces –in large numbers there today, while it might have an initial favorable military impact, (it) would almost certainly lead to adverse political and in the long run adverse military operations" (1964:p.2).

This changed after Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964. During the latter, the USS Maddox destroyer fired warning shots at North Vietnamese boats, which was then met with retaliation on August 2, 1964. However, on August 4, a second attack that transpired to have not happened, was misrepresented by Johnson to garner political support that helped him pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and escalate America's involvement in the war (Moise, 1996:p.xi-xv). There was undoubtedly a lack of transparency in the Vietnam War, notably when the bombing of Cambodia was revealed in 1969 by the New York Times, (Beecher), and the similar activities in Loas were exposed later (Hersh, 1973). Most infamously were the revelations of the leaked Pentagon Papers in 1971 that showed that the Vietnam War's military campaign had been more expansive than had been reported to the public by the media (Sheehan, 1971). However, the Vietnam War's original premise to contain Communism generally remained clear. Transparency worsened as American involvement increased through Johnson's manipulation of the war's events and progress and Nixon's covert expansion of its military activities from its original limited objectives. This heightened public distrust and the attitudes that became known as the Vietnam Syndrome.

By comparison, the Iraq War had the basic problem of lacking transparency before it even began when its main rationale that Saddam possessed WMDs turning out to be untrue, causing a quicker collapse in public support. Saddam was intentionally ambiguous, partly to deter the regional threat of Iran , which he had led Iraq into war against in the 1980s through provoking fear that he possessed WMDs. The source of the allegations was the Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, who claimed that Saddam had mobile WMDs laboratories to engineer his removal, whose account was included in Powell's UN presentation (Mayer, 2004). Chalabi founded the Iraqi National Congress after the 1991 Gulf War and befriended neoconservatives and proponents of invading Iraq, such as Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney (Ignatius, 2015). The CIA operative, Robert Baer, acknowledged that "Chalabi was scamming the US because the US wanted to be scammed" (Mayer, 2004). Wolfowitz admitted that

when deciding on the main justification for war, that "we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on, which was weapons of mass destruction" (Ibid).

Ironically, Saddam had a good understanding of the significance of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, (though he probably did not call it that himself), and did not believe that America would invade. "America was cowardly, he believed; they did not have stomach for bloody battles, mutilated warriors, and body bags. Hussein ruminated with his lieutenants about how the United States had pulled out of Somalia after only a few solders had been killed and how waged war in the Balkans with air power" (Leffler, 2023:p.176). However, Saddam ultimately misunderstood that the neoconservatives were different to previous US administrations through their equal lack of concern about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and their determination to use military force to remove him. Lawrence Wilkerson, who was with Powell at the UN presentation explained for this research that "the briefing was based on policymakers who wanted the war and who twisted the intelligence to get it. Powell and I got caught up in the middle of that without adequate tools to detect it and defeat it—or resign, which, looking back, I know I wish I had done" (2022). When the allegations proved false, this accelerated the decline in public support as well as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome quicker than the Vietnam War itself did. The neoconservatives exploited the post-9/11 fear to pursue an ideological war by presenting it as a matter of national security that undercut sober public dialogue:

The neocons' disinclination to engage in an exchange with the masses in the pre-9/11 period meant that they never created the diverse, cross-class and trans-class alliances that were needed to sustain hegemony in the long term. Even their moment of 'limited hegemony' was triggered by an external event- 9/11- rather than through exercising leadership over the masses. In order to drum up support for the invasion of Iraq, the Bush Administration resorted to manipulating or 'coercing' (albeit non-violently) public opinion by constructing a case for the war based on intelligence that had been cherry-picked and exaggerated to suit the administration's purpose (Ryan, 2010:p.167).

Consequently, the neoconservatives built circumstantial support, (that was still only tentative), in the post-9/11 fever-pitch atmosphere for their own foreign policy preferences. Obama recognised this in 2002 when he expressed his opposition to the war. Although, his criticism of 'dumb wars' is most remembered, Obama shrewdly warned of the Iraq War's motives. He stated that, "what I am opposed to is the cynical attempt by Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz and other armchair, weekend warriors in this administration to shove their own ideological agendas down our throats, irrespective of the costs in lives lost and in hardships borne" (2002). Although neoconservatives received implicit public backing through winning the 2002 mid-terms, albeit by using cherry-picked

evidence, support was fickle and contextual. It was not developed through a concerted effort of nourishing public opinion with transparency to avoid inflaming the Vietnam Syndrome attitudes. The fact that there was a genuine sense of emergency did not mean that Bush could ignore the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome without damaging consequences.

Bush compared the 9/11 to the Pearl Harbor attack to justify his militaristic foreign policy approach during the early stages of the Iraq War. In a speech in Poland, which was one of America's few military partners in Iraq, Bush stated that, "the events of September 11th were as decisive as Pearl Harbor" (2003). However, after the Pearl Harbor attack, Franklin D. Roosevelt engaged substantially with public opinion to win support to enter World War Two. Americans supported going to war against their attackers, Imperial Japan, but they needed more persuasion to fight Nazi Germany. Roosevelt was also wary of heavily using government propaganda because it had provoked noninterventionist attitudes post-World War One (Steele, 1984:p.70). He therefore worked closely with citizens' organisations, and their "aim was to target sections of society that were characterized as anti-war in order work toward the appearance of unity at the very least" (Johnstone, 2010:p.38).

In contrast, Bush and the neoconservatives did not make the similar efforts to create sustained support and were instead more confrontational towards detractors. Subsequently, the circumstantial support for the Iraq War was brittle, and it quickly evaporated when it became protracted, and suspicions grew that it lacked transparency. By February 2004, 59% of Americans believed that the Bush administration had exaggerated intelligence on Iraqi weapons (CBS). After the CIA's Iraq Survey Group concluded in October 2004 that Saddam did not have WMDs, nor the capabilities to make them (Borger, 2004), at least 50% of Americans believed that Bush had deliberately misled the public by April 2005 onwards (Gallup). Consequently, when the Iraq War's purpose became increasingly unclear having been unconnected to al-Qaeda or WMDs, it became unpopular rapidly faster compared to the Vietnam War:

Although public support for both the Vietnam and the Iraq wars was strong as each conflict began, at least as measured by Gallup's "mistake" question, opposition to the latter has escalated much more quickly. Within a year and three months of the Iraq war's inception, a majority of Americans said it was a mistake. It wasn't until over three years after the inception of the Vietnam War that a majority called it a mistake (Gallup, 2005).Therefore, the Iraq War's sharp unpopularity meant that America did not go through as a divisive period as the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War provoked as much of a cultural reaction as well as a political one, which contributed to making the divisive legacy of the conflict deeply ingrained in US society. It was arguably the first conflict that Americans had almost unfettered visual access to at home because

journalists were able to televise the conflict freely, speaking to US soldiers and locals, and the graphicly increasing fatalities turned many Americans against the war. There were protest songs made such as 'For What It's Worth' by Buffalo Springfield in 1966, 'Fortunate Son' by Creedance Clearwater and Revival released in 1969, and 'Give Peace a Chance' by John Lennon in 1969 amongst others. Nevertheless, the visual impact of the war was especially profound and post-Vietnam, twenty-four films were released about the conflict between 1975 and 1991, averaging 1.5 being made a year. (Boggs & Pollard, 2007:p.62). With Jeffersonian views particularly present in the coastal states that called for restraint, it was perhaps unsurprising Hollywood made multiple anti-Vietnam War films, and that actors such as Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland were high-profile anti-war activists. Furthermore, because the draft meant that so many Americans fought in the Vietnam War as opposed to a professional army in the Iraq War, there were some soldiers who were later able to make films on the subject based on their own experiences. Notably for example, the director Oliver Stone served in Vietnam from 1967 until 1968, and was awarded military honours including a Bronze Star with "V" Device for valor, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster (to denote two wounds), an Air Medal and the Combat Infantryman Badge. His service in Vietnam inspired him to depict the brutality of the war in his three films, 'Platoon' in 1986, 'Born on the Fourth of July in 1989, and 'Heavan and Earth' in1993.

Other award-winning films critiquing the Vietnam War, included Francis Ford Coppola's, 1979 film, 'Apocalypse Now', based on Joseph Conrad's novella, 'The Heart of Darkness' set in colonial Belgian Congo, and on Michael Herr's Despatches' (1977), chronicling his experiences in Vietnam as a war correspondent. In the film, the protagonist Captain Willard is instructed to kill his fellow American, Colonel Kurtz who became rogue in his methods in fighting the Viet Cong. Kurtz began as a soldier with a strong sense of good and evil, but the experience of war transforms him into a tyrant behaving as a demi-god amongst his local militia. Consequently, his brutality towards the Vietnamese made him indistinguishable from the evil he that he set out to defeat. It conveyed that even with idealistic intentions of war to promote democracy and freedom, as the United States often frames itself, the 'horror', to use Kurtz's final words, of war brings out a human nature that makes good and evil indistinguishable amongst soldiers. Additionally, Stanley Kubrick's 1987, 'Full Metal Jacket', which Herr also co-wrote the screenplay for as well as 'Apocalypse Now', is about young men in boot camp trained to become killers in Vietnam, explores the duality of man. On the one hand, the film's protagonist Joker, unsubtly writes on his helmet 'born to kill' on the Vietnamese battlefield, but he also wears a peace symbol on his coat. Joker said to his commander that he understood that he is on the American side. However, it ending of Joker deciding whether to kill a mortally wounded girl to end her suffering, or let her die slowly, to then walk through a burning city that his unit liberated.

These sequences reflected that war's destructive consequences full of moral complexities, rather than dichotomies.

Although the more critically successful films were anti-war, with Hollywood mostly being opposed, there were nonetheless clear signs of divisions in film portrayals that gave the war a polarised legacy, mirroring therefore, much of American society and Congress. For example, the 'Rambo' trilogy, is often held as a conservative critique of the treatment of soldiers at home. It reflected Jacksonian grievances that believed anti-war activists at home prevented them from winning. Its first instalment, 'Rambo: First Blood', follows the titular character, a Vietnam veteran who becomes a fugitive when he cannot adjust to life at home after the traumas from the war. This was during a period when there were disputes about the alleged behaviour of anti-war activists in which they spat at returning US soldiers from Vietnam and called them "baby killers". However, this story was later debunked as a myth as a result of inaccurate anecdotes that were particularly spread retrospectively, with not enough unambiguous documented incidents making this credible (Lembcke, 1998). In the midst of it however, the treatment of veterans was a significant fault-line between liberal anti-war activists and conservative defenders of the Vietnam War. Indeed it led President Reagan to suggest that "Rambo is a Republican" (1985), playing into his own narrative that the anti-war activists did not let the soldiers win and encouraging "revenge fantasies" (Hellmann, 1991:p.140).

Its 1985 sequel, 'Rambo: First Blood II', and its box office success as the second highest domestic revenue at approximately $150 million, and $300 million globally, contributed to resurfacing the divisive legacy of Vietnam. In particularly, it drew attention to the POW/MIA issue when its protagonist goes back to Vietnam to free prisoners of war. This referred to the theory that POWs remained in Vietnam after the hasty US withdrawal, and by 1991, The Wall Street Journal found that 70% of Americans believe some were still there (Keating, 1994:p.224). The level of public interest that included the 1992 US Independent presidential candidate, Ross Perot pressuring the government to look into the matter. It resulted in a Congressional investigation from 1991 until 1993, by the US Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs which Perot testified to, and was chaired by Kerry (1992). It found "no compelling evidence that proves that any American remains alive in captivity in Southeast Asia" (1993). Nonetheless, the cultural impact of the Vietnam War through its depiction by many films, meant that its sensitive legacy continued to be debated by the public, and politicians years later.

By comparison, there have been about only fifteen films in total made about both the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War. Additionally, there were few American anti-war music with the

notable exceptions such as Green Day's 2004 and 2005 songs, 'American Idiot' and 'Holiday' and the Dixie Chick's 2006 song, 'Not Ready to Make Nice'. Indeed, there was even the notable pro-war song by Toby Keith, 'Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue' in 2002. Perhaps a reason that there was less dramatic inspiration for films was because the Iraq War began the practice of embedded journalism, whereby reporters had to work closely with US military units and received a lot of their reported information from them. It was in response to complaints about journalist access during the Gulf War, when the US military only provided pooled footage and images of the media to show, as part of controlling the narrative and maintaining domestic support. Nonetheless, embedded journalism also attracted criticism for not presenting the full picture was not presented, and heavily relying on the US military and government (Myers, 2010).

Notable films made about the Iraq War involved relying on embedded journalism, such as Katherine Bigelow's 2009 film, 'The Hurt Locker'. Her film was a commentary on the machismo adrenaline seeking of war, depicting an Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, written by a former embedded journalist Mark Boal. Separately, Clint Eastwood's 2014 biopic, 'American Sniper', about the Navy SEAL, Chris Kyle, whilst undoubtedly showed a more explicit admiration of US soldiers for the sacrifice and risks that they put themselves into, nonetheless similarly emphasised the adverse psychological effects it had on soldiers from asymmetric warfare. However, these films did not have the same cultural impact that made the war be felt at home as there was more detachment amongst American audiences compared to the Vietnam War that had the draft and forced its consequences upon them by involving far more Americans. The number of fatalities illustrates this too as 4,492 American soldiers died in Iraq, compared to 58,220 in Vietnam.

Americans simply did not want to hear about it. The dramatic events of the invasion were over within a few months: Saddam Hussein's regime had been toppled, along with his statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square, and George W Bush had flown on to an aircraft carrier with a "Mission Accomplished" banner, declaring that major combat operations were over. The minor combat operations would continue indefinitely, of course, as the power vacuum was filled by the chaos of a growing insurgency and great spasms of sectarian violence. That's the Iraq war of The Hurt Locker – a rudderless, perilous, borderline nihilistic endeavor that politicians could not risk their careers to end Tobias, 2023*).*

Instead, the Iraq War's failure quickly became associated with the ideological motives amongst neoconservatives as a war of choice that neither affected Americans as directly, nor caused as strong opposing cultural narratives or depictions as the Vietnam War had. Consequently there was a broader consensus that it had failed and lost support with fewer emotive divisions about the

sacrifice it brought similar to the Vietnam War between its critics and supporters. This allowed more attention to be given to questions about its purpose and when to use military intervention, which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had been asking. The war was irrelevant to the broader national security interests of fighting al-Qaeda, and it even made that task more challenging to do. In contrast, the Vietnam War provoked greater division because of a political perception that it justifiably tried to contain Communism, as neoconservatives such as Henry Jackson and Reagan argued. Therefore, when the Iraq War lacked purpose, and when it failed to achieve its aims of democratisation and strengthening American security and power, this marked "the end of the neo-conservative moment" (Ikenberry, 2004:p.7). Consequently, the clearer consensus that the Iraq War was wrong, encouraged more introspective attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through the public wanting greater transparency and input into rethinking America's approach towards military intervention. Furthermore, the less divisive domestic political atmosphere as a result of this consensus allowed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome become more legitimate in US foreign policy debate. Thus, questions on how military intervention should be used, especially in fulfilling its sense having an exceptional global role to promote its ideals, began to be given greater consideration by policymakers.

The other key failure of the Iraq War that triggered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was its moral hypocrisy through the human rights abuses committed by Americans. The abuses provoked more debate about the credibility of America's supposed role as a global leader and how it promotes its perceived values of freedom and democracy. The Bush administration and the neoconservatives had emphasised Wilsonian ideals of promoting human rights, freedom, and democracy as central to the Iraq War and the broader War on Terror. They were largely driven by their belief in American exceptionalism, and that America has a special global role that is superior to others (McCrisken, 2003:p.1) to promote and spread its perceived ideals proactively worldwide. Bush rhetorically made the promotion of freedom and morality central to his foreign policy approach throughout his presidency post-9/11. During his second inaugural address, Bush stated that, "we will persistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation: The moral choice between oppression, which is always wrong, and freedom, which is eternally right. America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude, or that any human being aspires to live at the mercy of bullies" (2005).

However, the credibility of the neoconservatives' claim that they were moral leaders who were spearheading Wilsonian ideals when invading Iraq became severely undermined by the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse. The abuse received greater public attention in April 2004, when a CBS documentary exposed pictures of the conditions detainees were subjected to enhanced

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interrogation techniques by soldiers and CIA operatives. Notably, the picture of the detainee, Ali Shallal al-Qaisi, standing on a box and hooded, attracted condemnation both internationally and in America (CBS, 2004). Al-Qaisi was a non-combatant Sunni Iraqi captured by the US military after he attempted to tell the international media that American soldiers were dumping severed bodies in a football pitch that he owned (2015). He recalled "being tortured at the hands of the people of a great nation that carries the torch of freedom and human rights" (2008). In the CBS investigation, the then-deputy director of Coalition operations in Iraq, Brigadier General, Mark Kimmitt, criticised the abuse, saying, "if we can't hold ourselves up as an example of how to treat people with dignity and respect...We can't ask that other nations do that to our soldiers as well" (2004).

The revelation demonstrated the more aggressive Jacksonian elements of the neoconservative approach to the war by treating Iraqis with extreme violence, whether they were terrorists and combatants or not,. "Jacksonians are less willing to draw sharp distinctions between actual enemy combatants and other members of the enemy nation, particularly when opponents eschew traditional uniforms, and insist on ensconcing themselves in mosques, hospitals, and other non-military buildings" (Moser, 2004). A US military investigation by Major General Antonio Taguba that was released May found that multiple forms of abuse had taken place. This included, "punching, slapping, and kicking detainees...Videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees" (2004:p.16), amongst others that received media coverage (Higham & Stephens, 2004). This treatment reflected the influence of Jacksonian fighting from Frontier warfare, which often permits the torturing of prisoners of war against 'dishonorable' enemies that do not respect conventions of formally declaring war or fighting with the same standards (Mead, 2000:p.22). For Andrew Jackson, "adversaries who honor the code will benefit from its protections, while those who want a dirty fight will get one" (Ibid). However, this approach in Iraq that was magnified by the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal, undermined the Bush administration's claim that the war had predominantly Wilsonian motives.

The scandal caused outrage amongst the American media and sections of the general public, provoking debate about the moral credibility of the Iraq War and America's broader position as a global leader. The Boston Globe called for Rumsfeld's resignation (2004) as well as The Economist, which had the picture of al-Qaisi as its front page with the headline, 'Resign, Rumsfeld' above (2004). Additionally, the story received more attention amongst the American public compared to other stages of Iraq War and became an important factor for its support to begin decreasing. Rumsfeld himself admitted that the treatment was "inconsistent with the values of our nation" (2004). It also drew criticism from Republicans such as the senator for South Carolina, Lindsey Graham. He staunchly supported Bush and the Iraq War but acknowledged that "the American public needs to

understand we're talking about rape and murder here" (Ibid). Furthermore, it surfaced that the Bush administration had not been transparent about its knowledge or supposed opposition to the abuse when the torture memos were leaked after the Abu Ghraib revelations. It showed that in August 2002, the Assistant Attorney General, Jay Bybee had authorised enhanced interrogation techniques by narrowly defining torture. He wrote that torture "must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death" (2004). In contrast, the Army's Field Manual for 'Intelligence Interrogations', prohibits food or sleep deprivation and forced stress positions (Ibid). Bush retrospectively defended the enhanced interrogation techniques, claiming that, "to suggest that our intelligence personnel violated the law by following the legal guidance they received is insulting and wrong. The CIA interrogation program saved lives" (2011:p.171). The prisoner abuse further reflected the administration's Jacksonian approach to the war as they believe that "dishonorable enemies fight dirty wars and in that case all rules are off" (Mead, 1999/2000:p.21), The refusal to treat enemies within international law highlighted this out of the Jacksonian belief that they would not observe the same rules.

The Pew Research Center found that, "roughly three-quarters of Americans (76%) say they have seen some of the pictures on which reports of mistreatment are based. This compares with 55% who said they had seen the graphic photos or video of the attack on U.S. civilian contractors in Falluja in early April" (2004). Furthermore, the majority of Americans said that the war was not going well for the first time a 51% shortly afterwards (Ibid). This suggests that the concerns about the moral hypocrisies had a bigger impact in provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome than US fatalities, alongside the war's lack of transparency and protractedness. Joseph Nye argued that "during the Iraq War, the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo—in a manner inconsistent with American values—led to perceptions of hypocrisy that could not be reversed by broadcasting Muslims living well in the United States" (2019). Similarly, Andrew Bacevich, the Boston University Professor and veteran of the Vietnam War and the Gulf War was critical of Bush and the America's hypocritical militaristic foreign policy approach and advocated for more restraint. Bacevich, whose son died in the Iraq War, posited that the conflict exposed the "morality tale" (2010:p.19). He criticised the neoconservatives' interpretation of American exceptionalism and democracy promotion as a way to try to "remake the world" (p.60) through military intervention. Therefore, the response amongst the American public and commentators reflected a more sincere debate developing about America's place in the world and the role that military intervention should have in promoting its perceived values. This contrasted from the Vietnam War, where despite there being moral objections, much of the American public opposition came from the draft and not wanting to risk their lives.

How Obama approached the Vietnam Syndrome in his presidential campaign

This section argues that Obama's consistent opposition to the Iraq War from its start was significant to his success of becoming president. Barack Obama emerged as an early figure whose Jeffersonian foreign policy approach understood important concerns within the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by considering the effects of military intervention on domestic democratic trust and unity that had become more vulnerable. He approached this as early as his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention when he was running for the Senate election in Illinois. He quoted the motto on the Great Seal of the United States, 'E pluribus unum'- out of many, one. Obama displayed early signs of how he could partially detoxify the partisanship around the Iraq War and America's foreign policy approach during a time when the nation was fragmented. He attempted to heal divisions telling Americans that "there are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America" (2004). His message emphasised that no matter what differences Americans have politically, the country's exceptional qualities that he believes America has, can only shine by being united as one.

One could say that Obama's rhetoric was clichéd. It was not the first time an American politician portrayed the country as a unique place like a shining city upon a hill as John F. Kenney and Ronald Reagan had, or an indispensable nation like Bill Clinton. Nevertheless, central to Obama's speech was not the belief that America is superior by nature but that it possessed what he called, "the audacity of hope" (Ibid). He said that this was not about "blind optimism", but "the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; the hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores; the hope of a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta". He believed that change was not given, but worked for, through "the belief in things not seen; the belief that there are better days ahead" (Ibid). Obama portrayed America's story of promoting its ideals domestically and abroad as one that is always unfinished because of the hope that it can constantly improve itself and be a force for good worldwide.

By the 2006 mid-term election, opposition against the Iraq War gained momentum when the Democrats won control of both houses of Congress. More significantly, it reflected that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were solidifying, as the American public wanted a change in its foreign policy approach. Usually, mid-terms are dominated by debate about domestic concerns, which were present in 2006 and only exacerbated people's frustration in addition to Iraq. On domestic matters, Bush's response to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 was widely criticised for being slow when he took two days to return to Washington D.C. from his holiday in Texas after the hurricane had

hit (Bumiller, 2005). Additionally it provoked some debate about racism because approximately two-thirds of people living in New Orleans were African-American (Sandalow, 2005). In 2005, 66% and African-Americans said that the government would have responded quicker if most victims were white compared to 16% of what Americans agreeing (2015). The response attracted high-profile criticism, including from the rapper Kanye West who said at a hurricane relief concert that "George Bush doesn't care about black people" (Ibid). However, it did not create violent divisions about racism in America, nor was it connected in any way to foreign policy like the civil rights movement.

Although domestic problems increased general disillusionment, unusually for mid-terms, foreign policy, and specifically Bush's handling of the Iraq War polled as the biggest issue amongst voters. 27% cited Iraq as the most important issue that would determine their vote ahead of the economy at 19% and terrorism at 14% (2006). Additionally, those who prioritised Iraq as their reason for voting favoured the Democrats over the Republicans by 76% to 21%, with Independents favouring the Democrats two to one (Ibid). Furthermore, there was no event like 9/11 that provoked raw emotions, meaning that the American public's assessment was done more soberly with the war having been ongoing for three and a half years. Bush acknowledged that the electorate had sent a clear message of its disapproval of how the Iraq War was being handled by announcing the resignation of Rumsfeld days after the mid-terms. Bush said that Rumsfeld "understands that Iraq is not working well enough" (2006). Therefore, the mid-terms reflected that Americans wanted to change its foreign policy approach, with 57% expressing dissatisfaction with the Iraq War in its aftermath (Ibid). Obama empathised with this sentiment and built his presidential campaign around that he announced three months later.

When the war was a clear failure by the 2008 election, Obama's position demonstrated to the American public that he had good judgement with a desire to improve and reform America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention that considered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in the decision-making process. Analysing Obama by using Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions, illuminates Obama's approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and military intervention, through examining him as a Jeffersonian that encouraged a US foreign policy approach of restraint towards military intervention, and the domestic ramifications in policymaking. "George W. Bush's presidency was defined by an effort to bring Jacksonians and Wilsonians into a coalition; the political failure of Bush's ambitious approach created the context that made Obama's presidency possible" (Mead, 2010:p.60)

In Obama's *Foreign Affairs* article, in which he articulated his foreign policy vision, he stated that, "Iraq was a diversion from the fight against the terrorists who struck us on 9/11, and

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incompetent prosecution of the war by America's civilian leaders compounded the strategic blunder of choosing to wage in the first place" (2007:p.4-5). Obama reflected his early Jeffersonian views by encouraging to mostly keep the use of military intervention to direct national and security interests writing that, "we must refocus our efforts on Afghanistan and Pakistan- the central front in our war against al Qaeda-so that we are confront terrorists where their roots run" (p.9). When considering military intervention outside direct US interests, Obama emphasised the importance of co-operating with allies as part of being a moral and global leader, explaining that:

We must also consider using military force in circumstances beyond self-defense in order to provide for the common security that underpins global stability—to support friends, participate in stability and reconstruction operations, or confront mass atrocities. But when we do use force in situations other than self-defense, we should make every effort to garner the clear support and participation of others as President George H.W. Bush did when we led the effort to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991. The consequences of forgetting that lesson in the context of the current conflict in Iraq have been grave (p.7).

As well as Obama's candidacy's uniqueness by being the first African-American to become the nominee of one of the main US political parties and later president, he was also from a younger generation. His politics had not been formed by his record or views of the Vietnam War, or its legacy and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama was born in 1961, and he was thirteen years old when the Vietnam War ended, meaning that his view of it was mainly historical. Furthermore, he had little sense of the mood in America during the Vietnam War's most tumultuous years because he lived in Indonesia from the age of six until ten, before moving back to Hawaii. However, he recognised the distrust amongst the American public, and that in effect, the development of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was the most damaging consequences of the conflict. In his book, 'The Audacity of Hope', Obama wrote of the Vietnam War that, "perhaps the biggest casualty of that war was the bond of trust between the American people and their government—and between Americans themselves...Increasingly, many on the left voiced opposition not only to the Vietnam War but also to the broader aims of US foreign policy" (2008:p.287).

Therefore, Obama showed his awareness of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and his belief in the importance of acknowledging them. He emphasised that before conducting an intervention, he would consult the American public and make a case for why it would be in the national interest. Obama wrote, "ultimately, no foreign policy can succeed unless the American people understand it and feel they have a stake in its success-unless they trust that their government hears their concerns as well...We cannot expect Americans to support placing our men and women in

harm's way if we cannot show that we will use force wisely and judiciously" (p.15-16). Obama reflected Jeffersonian instincts by giving greater consideration to international and domestic factors when approaching military intervention, therefore showing more sensitivity towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Furthermore, Obama made his consistent opposition to the Iraq War a key part of his presidential campaign before he was in the Senate and during his tenure. Obama's anti-war stance in his campaign itself was not unusual as a Democratic candidate, since the party had embraced it since the 2004 election, and it was commonplace during the 2008 primaries. All of the main contenders such as Senator Hillary Clinton for New York, Senator John Edwards for North Carolina, and Senator Joe Biden for Delaware turned against the war. However, Obama reiterated that he opposed the war before it had begun, unlike his main primary opponents who authorised it in Congress. He emphasised that "we continue to be in a war that should never have been authorized" because he believed it was outside the national interest, and that, he was "proud of the fact that way back in 2002, I said that this war was a mistake" (2007). It was suggested that because Obama was not yet a Congressman during the vote, he faced less pressure about his position on the war. However, he retorted that his position nearly cost him his 2004 Senate election, when "it certainly didn't look like a cost-free decision when Saddam Hussein's statue was being pulled down in Baghdad (Ibid). Furthermore, like everybody else, Obama made a judgement based on the circumstances at the time, and he explained that, "from my vantage point, the case was not made" (2004).

The first way in which Obama built his presidential bid around his early opposition to the Iraq War was by distinguishing himself from his main opponents in the primaries and later, the general election. He used his record of his position on the Iraq War effectively against his main primaries opponent, Hillary Clinton who voted for the invasion in Congress. It became a clear dividing line between their respective campaigns, as the Cooperative Congressional Election Study found that 60% of firm opponents of the Iraq War supported Obama. Furthermore, this whole group represented 71% of all Democratic primaries voters. Conversely, 61% of Democratic primaries voters that supported the Iraq War supported Clinton, but this group only represented 6.3% of all primaries voters (2008). As the campaign continued into the general election, the economy became the salient issue after the global financial crisis that began at the end of 2007, caused by the subprime mortgage market and long-term deregulation (Field, 2022). Nevertheless, "though the economy became the dominant electoral issue in 2008, the Iraq War was, through direct and indirect pathways, ultimately the single most important contributor to Obama's presidential victory" (Jacobson, 2010:p.208).

Secondly, and more importantly, Obama also used his opposition to the Iraq War to convey the broader message of his campaign that he represented hope and change. This was a vehicle to mobilise the section of the public that represented the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.— although Obama's rivals such as Clinton and then McCain, attempted to portray Obama as being inexperienced, especially on foreign policy. In light of Obama's willingness to speak with traditional US adversaries such as Iran (2008), Clinton made unsubtle comparisons of Obama to Bush, warning that, "we've seen the tragic result of having a president who had neither the experience nor the wisdom to manage our foreign policy and safeguard our national security. We can't let that happen again" (Ibid). However, Obama responded by emphasising that it was so-called experienced politicians in Congress who elected to invade Iraq, and that the judgement mattered over experience. He highlighted his early Jeffersonian restraint to Americans in a debate against Clinton, arguing that "what the next president has to show is the kind of judgment that will ensure that we are using our military power wisely" (2008).

A contrasting feature of Obama's 2008 presidential campaign was his rhetorical message of change, epitomised by his slogan, 'change we can believe in', and his rally chant, 'yes we can', alongside advocating a somewhat conventional foreign policy approach. This was perhaps further reflected his Jeffersonian political ambitions that focused more on domestic policy such as healthcare, and reducing economic inequality during a historical global recession. Therefore, he advocated greater Jeffersonian restraint towards military intervention, especially outside direct national security interests through greater multilateralism with allies, hence his citing of George H.W. Bush's approach to the Gulf War. Additionally Obama said he would "not hesitate to use force, unilaterally if necessary, to protect the American people or our vital interests whenever we are attacked or imminently threatened (p.7). This resembled the Clinton Doctrine which placed preference on multilateral intervention outside direct US interests, but stressed that, "America would act "unilaterally when compelling national interests so demand" (1999:p.14). Ultimately, Obama offered a relatively conventional multilateral approach to "rebuild the alliances, partnerships, and institutions necessary to confront common threats and enhance common security" (2007:p.11). This led to critiques that Obama's candidacy used "symbolism as strategy (hope) and substance (change)" on foreign policy matters (Singh, 2012:p.28). Obama's critics naturally argued that he represented more symbolism than substance. Charles Krauthammer claimed:

For no presidential nominee in living memory had the gap between adulation and achievement been so great. Which is why McCain's Paris Hilton ads struck such a nerve. Obama's meteoric rise was based not on issues—there was not a dime's worth of difference between him and Hillary on issues—but on narrative, on eloquence, on charisma (2008).

Krauthammer was referring to McCain's attack advert that questioned Obama's readiness to be president or whether he was more of an overhyped celebrity (2008). Obama's campaign manager, Steve Hildebrand admitted that "it was the first time during the general election where I started to freak out...I thought if they can brand him as a celebrity rather than as a serious leader we're going to be in serious trouble" (2008). Obama and Clinton did have similar positions on Iraq by the 2008 primaries. Krauthammer's main point however, that Obama was no different to Clinton was not an accurate portrayal. Obama's strongest foreign policy principle was the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. He stated that, "I will work to negotiate a verifiable global ban on the production of new nuclear weapons material. We must also stop the spread of nuclear weapons technology and ensure that countries cannot build-or come to the brink of building-a weapons program under the auspices of developing peaceful nuclear power" (2007:p.9). Therefore, Obama encouraged "tough-minded diplomacy, backed by the whole range of instruments of American power-political, economic, and military-could bring success even when dealing with long-standing adversaries such as Iran and Syria" (Ibid).

Obama's greater willingness to speak with adversaries was a clear difference from Clinton who attempted to frame Obama's thinking as naïve, saying, "we simply cannot legitimize rogue regimes or weaken American prestige by impulsively agreeing to presidential level talks that have no preconditions" (2008). This difference reflected Obama's more Jeffersonian approach that promoted more diplomacy when approaching geopolitics to avoid conflict compared to Clinton's more Wilsonian views that were inflexible about talking to undemocratic states. Obama's Jeffersonian worldview also reflected greater sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by avoiding using military intervention as a primary foreign policy tool.

Instead, Obama's Jeffersonian approach meant that he believed that American power involved domestic political stability and confidence in its ideals before it fervently promoted them abroad. This did not mean that he accepted that American power was in decline, and indeed rejected the notion. The declinist school became relevant again amidst the failure of the Iraq War, as Michael Cox reflected that, "the US committed one of the most basic of great power errors: namely, of getting sucked into a quagmire in a country it would have been better advised to leave be" (2007:p.650) and consequently, "the question then is not whether decline is going to happen—it already is-but how successfully the United States will adjust to the process" (p.653). Nevertheless, Obama believed that America was still the major international power that could have a positive effect on the world. He argued that "to see American power in terminal decline is to ignore America's great promise and historic purpose in the world. If elected president, I will start renewing that promise and purpose the day I take office" (2008:p.4). This resembled Samuel Huntington's

argument in 'The U.S: Decline of Renewal?' (1988) that America frequently needs to adapt to maintain its power by refocusing where it is best to exercise it, and that this process should not be mistaken for decline. This reflected Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards military intervention that advocated using US power responsibly. Mead argued that "at their best, Jeffersonians provide a necessary element of caution and restraint in US foreign policy, preventing what Paul Kennedy calls 'imperial overstretch' by ensuring that America's ends are proportionate to its means (2010:p.64). Obama therefore believed in American exceptionalism, and that it possesses considerable power. However, he thought that this had to be used responsibility through adhering to its ideals and using military power more prudently with public consultation and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama also believed that this mattered to repair international trust as he argued that in "the wake of Iraq and Abu Ghraib, the world has lost trust in our purposes and our principles"(2007:p.4).

Overall, Obama's foreign policy platform for his 2008 campaign tried to balance between being a potentially transformative president (Rockman, 2012:p.1065) and resurrecting conventionality. On the one hand he promised that "the day I'm inaugurated, the country looks at itself differently. And don't underestimate that power. Don't underestimate that transformation" (2007). However, Obama advocated a similar approach to George H.W. Bush, particularly towards military intervention, who was perhaps one of the most conventional foreign policy establishment figures to be president. Nevertheless, Obama's shared belief in foreign policy restraint stemmed from Jeffersonian principles, rather than George H.W. Bush's Hamiltonian approach. Obama echoed aspects of the Powell Doctrine through his preference for multilateral intervention that garnered domestic public support. However, his Jeffersonian beliefs considered more of the domestic concerns amongst the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome such as how to effectively practice democracy at home by improving debate about promoting it abroad through military intervention. This differed from more Hamiltonian caution towards military intervention, which prioritises more economic incentives, rather than its effect on domestic and democratic stability, which encouraged gradual change in America's foreign policy approach.

Obama's mixed message of change and orthodoxy continued throughout his campaign against McCain in the general election. On a superficial level, Obama represented change through his youth compared to the older Vietnam veteran, and former prisoner of war McCain, in an election in which discussion of military records was absent in comparison to previous ones. On more tangible foreign policy areas, Obama continued making Iraq a dividing line with his early opposition and introducing a timetable to militarily withdraw. This helped Obama to manoeuvre on his previous opposition to the troop surge, which he acknowledged had "succeeded beyond our wildest dreams"

(2008). McCain used the surge's success to attack Obama's judgement (2008), but Obama attempted to blunt this criticism by reminding people that had decision-makers agreed with him in the first place, there would be no surge required. Obama rebutted:

John, you like to pretend like the war started in 2007. You talk about the surge. The war started in 2003, and at the time when the war started, you said it was going to be quick and easy. You said we knew where the weapons of mass destruction were. You were wrong. You said that we were going to be greeted as liberators. You were wrong. You said that there was no history of violence between Shiite and Sunni. And you were wrong. And so my question is…of judgment, of whether or not—of whether or not—if the question is who is best-equipped as the next president to make good decisions about how we use our military (2008).

As a Jeffersonian, Obama's main motive to leave Iraq was driven by a combination of international, and domestic factors. He did not believe that the Iraq War was directly in national interest, and he thought that it caused too much of a domestic burden militarily and economically, as America was experiencing an historic recession. Therefore, Obama responded in a Jeffersonian fashion through proposing a timetable to militarily withdraw within the first 16 months of his presidency (2008) to reduce the costs as quickly as possible, and bring a more restrained foreign policy approach that considered domestic factors such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome more. This also politically further distanced himself from McCain who made no firm commitments and favoured delegating that decision to military leaders. Obama's approach not only aligned with the recommendations by the Iraq Survey Group, but it appealed to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by outlining an exit strategy. Indeed, as polling day approached, voters felt fatigued by foreign policy. The Pew Research Center found that "60% said in September 2008 that domestic policy should be the primary focus of the new president. And a greater percentage than before the Iraq war now say the best way to reduce the threat of terror is to reduce America's military presence overseas" (2008). That is not to say that Iraq no longer mattered, as it came second in voter's priorities in exit polls at 10%, but it was far behind the economy, amidst the recession which was at 63% (CNN).

Moreover, despite Obama's early 'insurgency' campaign strategy, he adopted a more orthodox foreign policy approach as it progressed. Nominees of either party often move towards the political centre after winning primaries. However, "his choice of running-mate, Senator Joe Biden, chairman of the Foreign Relations committee and a consummate Washington insider after 35 years in the Senate, sat oddly with Obama's pledge to 'do things differently in Washington'. Biden had recorded the same vote to authorize the Iraq war that Obama had attacked Hillary Clinton for

casting" (Walker, 2008:p.1102-3). Therefore, his successful appeal to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome included a mix of advocating change in America's foreign policy approach and working with establishment figures. Obama brought change by encouraging a deeper reflection on how military intervention should be used to promote US ideals, and how the public should be considered in these decisions. Nevertheless, he also reintroduced some conventional thinking through promoting a more restrained and multilateral foreign policy approach. It would become internationally challenging to drastically shift America's foreign policy approach for Obama because the first task was to undo Bush's wars in the Middle East. Simultaneously, many Americans wanted more attention given to domestic policy rather than radical reform to its foreign policy approach in light of the economic problems when Obama was elected.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained how the Iraq War provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and how Obama became a figurehead amongst this constituency to change America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention. In doing so, it has covered how the military failures of the Iraq War, especially the post-Saddam occupation, caused political destabilisation that caused a quagmire. The neoconservatives' faith in democratic peace theory did not materialise, and the de-Baathification policy ostracised the military which provoked an insurgency that was later exploited by al-Qaeda . Additionally, the military decision-makers and the Bush administration's counterinsurgency strategy that attempted to repudiate the 'lessons of Vietnam' had some success in limiting American fatalities, but it offered little improvement in bringing a political resolution closer and, therefore exit strategy. The protractedness of the war and the revelations that its rationale had lacked transparency and cost lives, which put the purpose of the war into question, consequently creating the conditions to provoke the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

When these attitudes solidified amongst Americans, it catalysed a much quicker decline in support for the Iraq War compared to Vietnam. The former was broadly accepted as a failure and therefore did not create deep cultural division like the Vietnam War had. Therefore, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome could become a legitimate part of US foreign policy debate about America's position as an exceptional nation and its use of military intervention to promote its ideals. The fundamental purpose of the Iraq War was shattered when it became clearer that Saddam was not an imminent threat as the Bush administration claimed by having links to al-Qaeda or WMDs. Therefore, the quick evaporation of support, as opposed to the deep and prolonged national division during the Vietnam War, meant that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome gained more legitimacy. Additionally, Bush's claim that Iraq War was driven by Wilsonian ideals of democracy promotion and

human rights lost credibility after abuses in the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal. The brute force that included maltreating Iraqis, highlighted the war's broader Jacksonian approach to aggressively submit them into defeat, which undermined the democracy promotion agenda. These factors led to a more introspective process of re-evaluating America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention. From 2004, the Democrats began to empathise with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst the public. Although Bush won re-election, Obama received national attention in 2004 through his theme of unifying the nation. He further developed this message in his 2008 presidential campaign by promising change to America's foreign policy approach, which the public that represented the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome wanted.

Finally, the chapter analysed how Obama presented a foreign policy approach that advocated Jeffersonian restraint that particularly resonated with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This encouraged more introspection about America's global role and considered more how domestic public opinion should factor into policymaking around military intervention that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had wanted. It also reintroduced some familiar ideas of foreign policy restraint, similar to the Powell Doctrine. However, Obama's Jeffersonian belief that considered domestic factors in foreign policymaking and his opposition to the Iraq War offered greater introspection about the use of military intervention as way to promote US ideals. Although Obama had a somewhat conventional position on restraint as a candidate, he built support amongst the US public that was part of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as a candidate that represented change.

Chapter four will further explore Obama's foreign policy principles and doctrine in a period when the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive. It will also develop the analysis of Obama's Jeffersonian approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and military intervention. It will examine how whilst he was in office during economically and politically constraining times, he was able to bring change to America's foreign policy approach and bring more introspection about how America can more effectively promote its ideals.

Chapter 4: An Obama Doctrine? Or a management of the Vietnam Syndrome? Or both?

Introduction

This chapter explores the foreign policy approach of President Barack Obama in circumstances when attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive. It examines how Obama attempted to articulate distinctive principles that constituted as a doctrine, in conditions whereby he was constrained by the domestic and international factors that he inherited. It assesses how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome within American public opinion, and the apprehensions of international allies due to the Iraq War, affected Obama's ability to imprint his foreign policy approach. It uses Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions as a theoretical framework (2002), by further analysing how Obama consequently developed a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach (Holland, 2017). This was through Obama's consideration of domestic factors such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and his preference for greater restraint and diplomacy abroad in light of the Iraq War. Presidents often face the challenge of promising a fresh start when they naturally have to also work in the conditions that they enter office in (Quinn, 2017). Therefore, Obama adapted to the conditions in which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive, with a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that considered the domestic implications in his foreign policymaking, particularly towards military intervention (Mead, 2010 & Holland, 2017). In doing so, Obama tried to mark a change from George W. Bush's more militaristic neoconservative foreign policy approach. He was therefore particularly responsive to the attitudes of Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, the chapter evaluates Obama's legacy by examining how his preference of restraint endured post-presidency.

Obama promised in his inaugural address to develop a more restrained foreign policy approach that valued, "mutual interests" so that "common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace" (2009), to undo the damage of Bush's militaristic foreign policy approach that had provoked public distrust. Obama reminded Americans of the importance of alliances and encouraged them to:

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint (Ibid).

Obama's early rhetoric offered reform and gradual change rather than transformation, stating that "we will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in

Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet" (Ibid). Some foreign policy doctrines have tried to adapt to circumstances rather than reshaping the world- like the Powell Doctrine, which directly addressed and managed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when contemplating military intervention. However, the Powell Doctrine worked around the constraints that attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, specifically for the 1991 Gulf War, and did not outline a broader worldview of how America would use its instruments of hard and soft power.

Obama shared some similar ideas to the Powell Doctrine by also giving greater consideration to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, especially when compared to his predecessor, as well as preferring multilateral military intervention. Furthermore, he expressed scepticism towards dogmatic thinking in his political career. In 'The Audacity of Hope' Obama claimed that "for it is precisely the pursuit of ideological purity, the rigid orthodoxy and sheer predictability of our current political debate, that keeps us from finding new ways to meet the challenges we face as a country. It's what keeps us locked in 'either/or' thinking... it is such doctrinaire thinking and stark partisanship that have turned Americans off of politics" (2007:p.40). Robert Singh argued that Obama:

On the one hand, while repeating the standard liberal internationalist mantra about shared interests, mutual respect and common humanity that have characterized the mainstream Democrats for at least three decades, Obama has adopted a not so much quintessentially realist statecraft (in the international relations sense of "realism") as an unrelentingly pragmatic, prudent and at times accommodationist approach to world affairs—one not dissimilar, in important respects, to those of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and George H.W. Bush (2012:p.6)

However, Obama's foreign policy approach was more thought through, rather than being purely pragmatic or wedded to realpolitik. Indeed, Obama believed in American exceptionalism, and that America should proactively promote its perceived ideals such as democracy and set an example at home. However, he had a calculated expectation of America's ability to achieve this. This was because American power, whilst still considerable in the international system, had nonetheless declined relative to what it was in the immediate post-Cold War period. Consequently, Obama doubted America's efficacy, at least through military intervention, to promote its perceived values. Secondly, domestic factors, particularly the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, which Obama largely agreed with, meant that the faith in America's perceived values amongst the public was equally key to his approach to democracy promotion (Holland, 2017). His approach differed from rushing into military adventurism on a self-proclaimed mission of democracy promotion with little consideration for public opinion.

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The body of this chapter is divided into five sections. Firstly, it provides a brief historical analysis of US foreign policy doctrines and their relevance to how America promotes its ideals. Furthermore, it explains how domestic public opinion became a greater factor in US foreign policy doctrines and decision-making, especially the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, it will demonstrate how US foreign policy doctrines are made from a combination of principles, ideals, and pragmatism, based on a president's worldview of the international system that they are working within. This is opposed to regarding idealism and pragmatism as competing approaches in US foreign policymaking. A contextual analysis of US foreign policy doctrines will therefore help evaluate where the Obama Doctrine fits into US foreign policy history.

The second part examines the challenges that Obama encountered when attempting to improve relations with Muslim countries and the Middle East-North Africa region (MENA), having inherited Bush's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and promising to end the latter. Obama's former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta discussed the administration's foreign policy approach in an interview for this research (2021). It introduces the concept of Obama's foreign policy approach reflecting that of a "modern Jeffersonian" (Holland, 2017:p.40). Though Obama believed in American ideals such as democracy promotion and human rights, he shifted towards a more exemplary approach. This was demonstrated by his rebuilding of relations with Muslim states and encouraging them to emulate these ideals on their own paths, as opposed to promoting them through military intervention. Obama simultaneously communicated to Americans, particularly those that represented the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that he was taking a more restrained foreign policy approach.

This section also explores how Obama reduced American involvement in Middle Eastern geopolitics. The former Israeli minister, Dan Meridor discussed the how this affected Obama's approach to the Middle East peace process. Nevertheless, Obama's restrained approach to the region was particularly demonstrated by his cautious approach to the Arab spring (Hamid, 2011). Obama was reluctant to have a central role in determining the regimes that governed the multiple states that were experiencing revolutionary movements when he was simultaneously trying to avoid becoming drawn back into the region. Furthermore, the discussion engages with the literature that evaluates whether Obama's more restrained foreign policy approach that sympathised with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, represented a decline in US power (Quinn, 2011). It examines if America's waning influence in the MENA reflected US decline (Gerges, 2013), or whether Obama partially protected America power by addressing the rise of China. The chapter will argue that Obama's attempt to shift the national interest towards China was part of his approach towards managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. To achieve this, he aimed to reduce the use of

military intervention, particularly in the MENA, and focus on the economic threat that China posed to American power. This was through the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) (2015) and engaging with the territorial disputes over the South China Sea (Fisher, 2016).

The third section will explain that there was an Obama Doctrine, which he was slow to articulate. Obama's more restrained foreign policy approach focused on greater "burden sharing" (Krieg, 2016) amongst allies. Others argued that it was an approach of reactive counterpunching (Drezner, 2011), pragmatism (Murray, 2013) and retrenchment (Dueck, 2015). The section examines how as the first African-American president, Obama interrogated America's moral global leadership that required living up to the ideals that many claim it possesses. He argued America's foreign policy approach would take time to reform, or bend towards justice, but just as America took time to elect somebody of his background, he believed it could live up to the ideals America aspires to. The chapter explores how Obama had a strong belief in American exceptionalism. Contrary to his detractor's criticism (Steele, 2011), Obama believed in American exceptionalism. However, he argued that America had to follow the virtues that it claims to have and rebuild the American public's confidence so that it could credibly promote them abroad. It therefore introduces just war theory that Obama indicated would partially guide his philosophy towards military intervention in his 2009 Nobel Peace Prize speech whilst also taking inspiration from Christian Realism and Reinhold Niebuhr (2009). Obama posited that it should be accepted that war is inevitable, and that national interest should be prioritised when electing to go to war, but behaving justly in warfare was crucial. Obama's interpretation of just war theory therefore ties into his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach, whereby morality was important in a rationale for military intervention. However, it also had to serve the national interest, rather than right every wrong worldwide. This worldview was better developed by Obama in his 2014 West Point speech, which became the clearest articulation of his foreign policy doctrine.

This fourth section will further examine Obama as a "modern Jeffersonian" and how he approached the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to shape his own foreign policy approach through his agency. Obama was not squeamish about using military action, as Panetta opined (2021). This was demonstrated by Obama's decisiveness in the killing of Osama bin Laden. Nevertheless, Obama favoured small operations, and sought to avoid inflaming the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through actively avoiding large-scale, 'boots on the ground' interventions, through for example, drone warfare (Kitchen, 2017:p.18). However, Obama spoke in more conciliatory terms to allies and rivals and promoted greater multilateralism and diplomacy over militarism. This had its most tangible effects through the Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (2015), which Richard Nephew, who served in the State Department as the lead sanctions

expert in the negotiations outlines (2021). Furthermore, Meridor, who was the Israeli Minister of Intelligence and Atomic Energy at the time, discussed his views on the JCPOA for this research (2021). It reflected that Obama was not entirely disengaging from the MENA and was trying make America's foreign policy approach more diplomatic than militaristic, as further demonstrated when he negotiated the environmental Paris Agreement (2015). However, Obama's more diplomatic foreign policy approach and effort to reduce European dependence on America, prompted him to use economic measures to try to contain geopolitical rivals, as exemplified by his response to the 2014 annexation of the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, by the Russian dictator, Vladimir Putin (2014).

The final section will evaluate the legacy of Obama's foreign policy approach to managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by prioritising restraint over military intervention. Indeed, his main foreign policy tenets of caution towards military adventurism and encouraging greater independence amongst allies endured post-presidency. Unlike Obama, President Donald Trump had a far more aggressive tone through his 'America First' and Jacksonian rhetoric, and had little interest in multilateralism, having withdrawn from the Iran nuclear deal and believed that allies drained US resources. Nevertheless, the underpinning ideas towards a more restrained foreign policy approach, not only endured but expanded, as Trump and later President Joe Biden, previously Obama's vice president, worked to end the "forever wars", demonstrated by the Afghanistan withdrawal in an attempt to return to Jeffersonian restraint (2021). Furthermore, they both made China the main focus of America's foreign policy approach. This reflects that not only has the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome remained relevant, but Obama's general approach to them had lasting effects.

US Foreign Policy Doctrines

Before further examining what the Obama Doctrine looked like, a better understanding of what is meant by a US foreign policy doctrine is needed. A foreign policy doctrine is "a publicly expressed set of statements regarding the constitution of the international system, the own state's role within that system, and how the system and the state are subjected to a threat" (Sjostedt, 2007). The history of US foreign policy doctrines perhaps goes back to the end of George Washington's presidency when he gave his farewell address, mentioned in chapter one. Washington warned against unstable alliances, stating that "it is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world" (1796). This later had some influence on the Monroe Doctrine, outlined by the fifth president, James Monroe, who reiterated non-entanglement by not interfering with existing European colonies. However, Monroe noted that "we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this Hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety" (1823). The Monroe Doctrine consequently became a cornerstone for a more interventionist US

foreign policy approach through the justification of preventing European empires from creating new colonies in the Spanish American republics. Monroe stated that:

With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power, we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States (Ibid).

The Theodore Roosevelt Corollary reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine's principles and added that "in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power" (1904).

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points speech to Congress, the bedrock for Wilsonianism are a set of principles (1918). However, Wilsonianism is not considered to be doctrine because it encapsulates a set of ideals rather than more attainable foreign policy aims. Wilsonianism has significantly influenced tangible foreign policymaking decisions, particularly in approaches to conflicts motivated by democracy promotion and collective security through cooperating with international institutions (Cox, 2021). Nevertheless, Wilsonianism is a broader US foreign policy tradition and set of ideals that can guide doctrines, rather than tangible statements regarding the constitution of the international system, the state's own role within it and the threats the state faces.

On the other hand, Franklin D. Roosevelt did not have a formal foreign policy doctrine despite his involvement in momentous historical events, possibly because his approach changed as a result of them. In the early 1930s, Roosevelt favoured a non-interventionist approach, at least in the Latin American region through the Good Neighbor policy. He stated that, "the definite policy of the United States from now on is one opposed to armed intervention" (1933). Roosevelt began to favour international intervention in response to Nazi Germany's aggression in Europe and the outbreak of World War Two. However, as discussed in chapter one, Roosevelt could not support the Allied Powers because of Neutrality Acts and strong isolationist sentiments domestically. America did not enter the war until 1941 after the Pearl Harbor Attack by Imperial Japan.

Therefore, another recognised US foreign policy doctrine did not appear until the beginning of the Cold War through the Truman Doctrine. This began the policy of containment against Soviet Communism and totalitarianism through aid and military intervention if necessary. When

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announcing it in 1947 to a Joint Address to Congress, Truman stated that, "we shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes" (1947). The containment doctrine to stem the spread was the approach used throughout most of the Cold War by presidents such as John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, with Ronald Reagan going further by adopting a rollback policy to remove existing communist regimes. An alternative approach was détente which was the doctrinal approach used during the 1970s under Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter when US-Soviet relations thawed through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (Willrich & Rhinelander, 1973 & Pfaltzgaff Jr, 1980).

Post-Cold War, the Powell Doctrine materialised, though it was mostly an extension of the 1984 Weinberger Doctrine. Both advocated the use of force as a last resort and when it had international and domestic support, and was therefore particularly receptive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The Clinton Doctrine espoused 'democratic enlargement', outlined by the National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, who claimed that "the successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement, enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies" (1993). Clinton's democratic enlargement policy partly followed Francis Fukuyama's popular 'End of History' thesis during this time when the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War brought an end to the ideological rivalry between communism and liberal democracy. Fukuyama declared that it marked "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (1989:p.3). When approaching military intervention, Clinton was also sensitive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by following many of the Powell Doctrine's principles, though this received some criticism. Linda Miller argued that "the eagerness to embrace General Colin Powell's guidelines for the use of American force abroad—that force must be used massively, if at all, with clear political objectives and a definitive 'exit strategy'—may make sense in theory; in practice, such dogma robs American leaders of flexibility, however well suited it may be to the popular mood in the United States or to congressional constraints" (1994:p.629). Clinton demonstrated his ridged decision-making due to his concerns about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, even when he displayed Wilsonian motives for the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. Its rationale was to stop the human rights abuses that were being committed by the Serbian government against Kosovar Albanians. Nonetheless, Clinton's anxiety about US fatalities meant that he heavily relied on airpower with NATO before he later reluctantly deployed ground troops. The Bush Doctrine, as previously discussed was influenced by the Wolfowitz Doctrine (1993) and both eschewed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. They promoted neoconservative foreign policy

principles of democracy promotion, pre-emptive and unilateral military intervention that disregarded international institutions and shaped the strategy of the Iraq War.

Obama's Jeffersonian approach to trying to build a post-Bush era

This section examines Obama's task of undoing Bush's wars and introducing a Jeffersonian approach towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama did not publicly use the phrase, the 'Vietnam Syndrome', when he spoke about foreign policy. Nevertheless, even as a candidate, he showed a good understanding of the set of public attitudes it represents. He acknowledged that Americans needed to trust its government when a case for military intervention was being made, (2007:p.15-16), and that it was tied to the national interest. In his inaugural address, Obama called for, "a new era of responsibility—a recognition on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world" (2009). When assessing Obama's early foreign policy approach, Jonathan Freedland contended that:

Obama is determined to signal to the world that he is the unBush. Some on both the left and right have suggested that this is more symbolic than real, that in fact the basic lineaments of US policy remain in place. Obama will keep rather a lot of troops in Iraq until the end of 2011, just as the Bush administration planned to; he has intensified US involvement in Afghanistan, sending 17,000 more troops (2009).

Freedland implicitly highlighted the crux of the dual challenge Obama faced. He was tasked with addressing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst the American public by undoing Bush's policies, alongside developing his own distinctive direction in America's foreign policy approach. It exemplified the two broader factors that influence US foreign policymaking, the political structures that a president enters office in, and presidential agency in decision-making.

Scholars who argue that structures mainly determine a president's foreign policy approach, argue that they have little leverage to drastically shape policy and the agenda. Thomas Lynch and Robert Singh claim that "American administrations actually differ very little when it comes to foreign policy and especially to national security; they tend to observe the behavioural patterns of their predecessors" (2008:p.43). Similarly, Adam Quinn highlighted that "no one gets to begin the world again. Nor does anyone get to re-tread old steps exactly; the path they are required to walk can never precisely replicate the past" (2019:p.36). The political conditions internationally and domestically, undoubtedly influenced Obama's foreign policy approach. He inherited international circumstances such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq begun by his predecessor and the global recession. Therefore, Obama outlined the importance of prioritising domestic challenges and

America's economic recovery in his first National Security Strategy (NSS) to rebuild the resources to improve its international capabilities and leadership. The NSS advocated a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that prioritised domestic stability before exerting power abroad, stating that "our national security begins at home…Our prosperity serves as a wellspring for our power. It pays for our military, underwrites our diplomacy and development efforts, and serves as a leading source of our influence in the world" (2010:p.9). Simultaneously, Obama inherited domestic structural factors like public opinion and the heightened attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through its caution towards military intervention. Domestic concerns such as the impact of the recession and healthcare became more salient than foreign policy, with 60% placing the economy as a top priority (Eichenberg, 2009). "Put simply, for the vast majority of Americans in 2009, the economy and domestic policy issues were the most important" (Ibid).

Domestic structural mechanisms in US foreign policymaking also partially shape US foreign policymaking in favourable and constraining ways to the president. The Executive possesses considerable power in foreign policymaking through "first-mover advantages" (Canes-Wrone, Howell & Lewis, 2008:p.4), to direct foreign policymaking as well as possessing more information than Congress (Ibid). Therefore, presidents, as one of the Founding Fathers, Alexander Hamilton stated, "may establish an antecedent state of things, which ought to weigh in the legislative decision" (Federalist Papers, No.74, 1788). Nevertheless, other branches of government can act as a structural constraint or check to US foreign policymaking, which are indeed their purpose. Another Founding Father, James Madison, emphasised the importance for the Republic to have a division of powers, stating that, "the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny" (The Federalist Papers, No.47, 1788). Obama's foreign policymaking was affected by Congress, having only held Democratic control for his first two years, after which, a sharply partisan Republican party controlled at least one chamber. This added challenges to Obama's foreign policy approach and naturally, was indicative of public division, which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was part of.

Another approach to analysing US foreign policy and decision-making, places "greater emphasis on the actions and ideas of individual presidents" (Jarvis & Lister, 2017:p.216) and their agency. When managing public opinion, even if there is a sense of disillusion, as exemplified by the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through distrust and scepticism towards military intervention that affected Obama, presidents can somewhat shape it. "Citizens are highly responsive to what they see and hear from political elites" (Baum & Groeling, 2010:p.3). Foreign policy principles, and the considerations taken into formulating them, such as public opinion, can be conveyed through

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doctrines. Obama took time to articulate a doctrine, but part of its early development could be seen through his Jeffersonian approach that de-escalated the 'war on terror' by focusing more on deterring direct threats such as al-Qaeda. This contrasted from Bush's expansive Wilsonian democracy promotion and search for a Jacksonian total victory by obliterating adversaries. Ironically, considering the Bush administration, and especially its Jacksonian members craved victory, "the nature of the enemy (al-Qaeda) in respect to the 'war on terror' made it impossible to ascertain any criteria by which success could be measured" (Bentley, 2019:p.59). This led to a sense of a lack of purpose for the Iraq War when al-Qaeda only became more influential in Iraq, having not been before the invasion. The worsening of the Iraq War and subsequent quagmire contributed to provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, meaning that Obama had to establish clearer foreign policy objectives to address these public concerns. Obama therefore appreciated the limits of the structural environment that he was governing in, but also that presidential agency could tangibly change America's foreign policy approach. To do so, Obama gave more acknowledgement to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and he espoused US ideals with Jeffersonian restraint and diplomacy rather than quickly resorting to military intervention. He consequently attempted to continue shaping geopolitics towards US values by still embracing America's perceived role as an indispensable and exceptional nation.

Obama's Jeffersonian approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome

Obama's management of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when approaching military intervention can be regarded as Jeffersonian in line with Mead's framework, through his appreciation of public opinion in foreign policymaking, particularly towards military intervention. Jeffersonians take a more cautious approach to military intervention, preferring to avoid foreign entanglements because they fear it will damage domestic political stability. Thomas Jefferson himself wrote that war is "as much a punishment to the punisher as to the sufferer" (1794). Jeffersonians believe in promoting democracy and human rights, but they "focus first and foremost on the rights and liberties of American citizens. The reasons for are simple: Jeffersonians do not share Wilsonian optimism regarding foreign adventurism. Foreign policy, for them, is the careful calculation and management of costs and risks, striving to prevent the overreach of the state and—above all else—the tyranny of imperial presidency" (Holland, 2017:p.42). With Obama showing particular sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, he fits this description through his heavy emphasis on the domestic consequences of his foreign policy approach. As mentioned in the theoretical analysis in chapter one, Jeffersonians instinctively search for diplomatic resolutions or behave with aloofness towards the world to avoid wars and geopolitical entanglements in an effort to protect the democratic stability and US ideals at home. Jack Holland argues that Obama "governed as a 'modern

Jeffersonian': an internationalist, wary of the domestic implications of internationalism" (2017:p.40). Obama reflected his Jeffersonian instincts through closely monitoring the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by trying to rebuild public trust in American's own pollical leaders to bring domestic stability post-Iraq. As a Jeffersonian, Obama perceived this to be in the national interest in his foreign policy approach before advocating democracy promotion abroad.

Part of Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach to managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome involved looking at politics, both internationally and domestically, "as a complex problem-solving exercise" (Wright, 2010). As somebody who was not short of confidence in his own abilities, Obama said as a presidential candidate that part of what made him suitable to be the commander-in-chief, was that he was "a practical person, somebody who, I think can cut through some very complicated problems and figure out the right course of action" (2007). Obama's methodical thinking and calmness was framed as strength in foreign policymaking, as seen when his election campaign co-chair, General Tony McPeak described him as "no-drama Obama" (2008). Professor Stephen J. Wayne observed that, "Obama's beliefs are congruent with his personal skills of conciliation and compromise, of finding a middle ground on which people can agree…Compromise also enables him to be seen as level-headed, practical, flexible and rational (unlike his predecessor, George W. Bush who was viewed as ideological, stubborn, and uncompromising)" (2010), through his neoconservative foreign policy approach of Wilsonian crusading democracy promotion with Jacksonian military aggression. That is not to say that Obama had few foreign policy principles or ideals as a Jeffersonian, such as democracy promotion. Nevertheless, he thought more about the practicalities of proactive democracy promotion, and its effects on domestic political stability.

Part of Obama's management of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, involved not expending energy on how military intervention could be used as a foreign policy instrument. Previous administrations as discussed, have articulated foreign policy doctrines that emphasised consulting the public to avoid similar quagmires to the Vietnam War. This was exemplified by the Weinberger Doctrine and the Powell Doctrine. Obama however, initially departed from previous presidents' handling of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and domestic public opinion, by not fixating on how future military intervention should be conducted. His priority was to manage two ongoing wars, specifically to end the Iraq War that originally provoked the sentiment, and later articulate his foreign policy approach more clearly, thus exemplifying his methodical thinking. Revisiting Freedland's point about Obama being the 'unBush', the term should be further developed as being more than Obama merely trying to be unlike his predecessor through rhetoric. It should be seen as the first part of Obama forging a doctrine by trying to use his presidential agency to undo the damage caused by Bush's wars and then imprint his own foreign policy agenda. Indeed, Obama's first

NSS, explicitly outlined this systematic foreign policy approach, by first acknowledging the need to recognise "the world as it is" and the circumstances that he was working in, to then build towards "the world we seek" through his presidential agency (2010). In policy terms, the first stage of changing the political structures involved using his agency to end Bush's wars to then devise a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards the MENA that was less militaristic to improve regional relations.

Communicating to the Middle East and Americans a foreign policy approach of Jeffersonian restraint

Obama demonstrated his desire to improve relations with the MENA as a way to address the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically during his Cairo speech when he called for a "new beginning" (2009). In doing so, Obama was not only sending a message to Muslim states by directly speaking to them in Egypt, he was also simultaneously speaking to Americans. He conveyed to Americans that their government's foreign policy approach to the region, and how it conducts itself globally to promote its perceived ideals would change under his presidency. A central theme in Obama's speech to bridge his international and domestic audiences was his emphasis on the commonalities between Americans and Muslims that he believed they have. Far from Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis, which argued that differences in cultures would cause conflict (1996), Obama believed that the regions could be united by universal values.

Indeed, Obama downplayed his racial background, saying that "much has been made of the fact that an African American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected President. But my personal story is not so unique" (2009). This sharply contrasted from his 2004 Democratic convention speech in which he said his presence as an African-American keynote speaker reflected America's uniqueness as the land of opportunity. Instead, Obama cited his personal experience in Indonesia where he spent part of his childhood to highlight shared its values with America, to exemplify that "Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition. I saw it first-hand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country" (Ibid).

Obama conveyed to the international community and Americans that he would be more cooperative and less dictatorial in his foreign policy approach. In a section that was more likely aimed towards Americans, Obama demonstrated his Jeffersonian values by quoting Jefferson in his Cairo speech, stating, "I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be" (1815). Moreover, Obama referenced Jefferson's ownership of the Koran that he "kept in his personal library" (2009) to highlight US commonalities with the Middle East region that had become an adversarial relationship during Bush's presidency. Obama similarly

believed that America most effectively exercises its power by using it prudently and responsibly, through avoiding overextension abroad, especially in light of the Iraq War. Moreover, Obama signalled to the American public, and particularly the section that made up the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, that he was going to use American power prudently, and not seek out military adventurism, particularly in the MENA. He made this point more explicitly later in his speech to people at home and abroad, by saying that he would not engage in democracy promotion as proactively, at least compared to his predecessor.

Obama acknowledged the fact that the Iraq War had demonstrated that such an approach can have destructive outcomes, saying, "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. So let me be clear: No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other. That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people" (2009). Instead, he argued that the universal values shared between America and the MENA meant that America could consequently have a more restrained foreign policy approach instead of proactively promoting ideals, because "the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights" (Ibid). These sentiments in Obama's foreign policy approach, particularly towards democracy promotion were later reiterated in his NSS, which similarly stated that, "America will not impose any system of government on another country, but our long-term security and prosperity depends on our steady support for universal values" (2010:p.36).

Therefore, Obama did not disavow democracy promotion or, as Nicholas Bouchet put it, the 'democracy tradition' in his foreign policy approach. Instead Obama employed a Jeffersonian approach to democracy promotion in which, "the bottom line, for this administration too, is ultimately that the acceptance of alternative paths to democracy remains within the limits of what is acceptable to the liberal universalist world-view. The 'own path' that other countries follow must still eventually lead to a destination that is recognizable as liberal democratic to the United States" (Bouchet, 2013:p.39). Nevertheless, Obama's expressed belief in universal values signalled to international actors and the domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that he would depart from Bush's approach of aggressive democracy promotion and behave more as an exemplar.

Obama's gesturing towards a more restrained foreign policy approach after his first year was broadly well received by most Americans, as 65% believed that he would do the right thing in world affairs, according to the Pew Research Center (2010). Additionally, the general public was not veering dramatically towards isolationism, with the minority at 46% believing that the country should take

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care of itself. European states showed similar views, with 44% of Germans, 49% of Britons and as much as 65% of the French public holding this opinion (Ibid). Muslim countries however, mostly remained sceptical, after years of military action in the MENA, which they continued to feel threatened by. Only 23% of Turkish Muslims and 31% Egyptian Muslims viewing Obama positively in 2010 (Ibid). In light of entering office during an economic crisis and America's military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama was "proposing to return American foreign policy to a more consensus, multilateral variant, less reliant on the tools of military force" (Kitchen, 2019:p.16), that cultivated moderate Muslim opinion (Kitchen, 2011).

Furthermore, Obama did not fully disengage from the region. He tried to revive the Middle East peace process, just as Democratic presidents, Carter, and Clinton had previously done. Obama appointed George Mitchell to convene talks. Mitchell had been involved in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland to end the 'Troubles' of sectarian violence. However, problems arose even before attempting to begin negotiations in 2013-14, as Hamas, the governing organisation in Gaza, opposed the proposed talks for only including Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, based in the West Bank. Additionally, the then centre-right Likud-led Israeli government was headstrong about settlements despite initially agreeing a short-term freeze. Meridor, a minister at the time, claimed that the Obama administration "just didn't understand the situation on the ground" (2021). Obama sensed that the leaders involved, treated negotiations as something they knew that they had to publicly try, whilst having little interest in making progress. He recalled that when he hosted Benjamin Netanyahu, the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Mahmoud Abbas, Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian President, and King Abdullah of Jordan, that "the speeches, the small talk, the easy familiarity—it all felt too comfortable, almost ritualized, a performance that each of the four leaders had probably participated in dozens of times before, designed to placate the latest US president who thought things could change" (2020:p.635).

Obama's tentative approach to the MENA to avoid further entanglements, became tested during the 2011 Egyptian revolution that was part of the wider Arab Spring. The leader and dictator, Mubarak, had been a long-term US ally. It demonstrated America's inconsistency towards democracy promotion by favouring an undemocratic ally for regional stability, which put Obama in a challenging position to begin with, before even considering the extent of which the US should get involved. Nevertheless, it provoked familiar normative US foreign policy debates about America's global role, even during a period when the domestic public had quite clearly indicated that it wanted a more modest one. Obama's Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton recalled that the Egyptian protests provoked these discussions and how they gaged the domestic mood, stating:

We delved once more into questions that had bedevilled US policymakers for generations: How should we balance strategic interests against core values? Can we successfully influence the internal politics of other nations and nurture democracy where it has never flowered before, without incurring negative unintended consequences? What does it mean to be on the right side of history… Indeed Americans of all ages and political stripe were all moved by the sight of people so long repressed finally demanding their universal human rights. (2014:p.283).

Furthermore, not only were American policymakers acknowledging that there was still an expectation for America to be a global leader, but others around the world wanted them to act as one. As much as America's reputation was damaged by the War on Terror, even parts of the MENA region wanted it to act. Shadi Hamid observed of Egyptian protestors during the revolution that "despite their sometimes vociferous anti-Americanism, they almost always seemed to want the United States to do more in the region, rather than less" (2011). This was exemplified by Egyptian protestors calling on Obama to withdraw support from Mubarak, as they knew that America still had considerable influence, and they were proven correct when the regime fell shortly afterwards.

Continuing political uncertainty in the MENA did not decrease Obama's determination to shift the national interest towards Asia and his limited involvement in the Egyptian revolution reflected his broader strategic change to retrench from the MENA. The Iranian academic Vali Nasr noted, "Obama remained intent on leaving the Middle East, and he was not going to let himself be distracted from that mission by sudden eruptions of pro-democracy protests" (2013:p.164). This was consistent with a Jeffersonian worldview to avoid what he perceived as unnecessary risks and entanglements rebalancing resources on more immediate threats to the US in the international system from the MENA towards Asia. Obama demonstrated this Jeffersonian approach by beginning the strategic shift through his withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 and narrowing the objectives in Afghanistan that emphasised fighting terrorism rather than state-building, and democracy promotion, by partially increasing troop levels with the overarching goal of reducing US involvement. Obama demonstrated his empathy with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in his decision-making on Afghanistan when he argued with his Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates over increasing troops there. Obama recalled that "Gates understood as well as anybody congressional pressure, public opinion, and the and budgetary constraint. But for him, these were obstacles to navigate around, not legitimate factors that should inform our decision" (2020:p.436). Instead, Gates regarded "the weariness that the nation might feel after close to a decade of war—as mere 'politics'…It was hard for him to see that what he dismissed as politics was democracy as it was supposed to work" (Ibid). Obama's former CIA Director, and later Secretary of Defense, Panetta, who succeeded Gates, sympathised with his concerns about America's ability to stabilise Afghanistan, stating:

In many ways Iraq had done a better job at being able to secure and govern itself that didn't ultimately pan out, but there was at least a sense that Iraq had better capabilities of doing that. Afghanistan, it was a struggle at trying to get the government there to be able to come together and both govern the country in an effective way to move away from the corruption that had occurred there for a long time. (2021)

Obama's decision-making process on the Afghanistan War reflected a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach through weighing the costs and risks and how it would affect domestic politics. "The ultimate decision to deploy 30,000 additional US troops is indicative that Obama is a modern Jeffersonian, prepared to commit sizable forces to conflicts perceived to be in the national interest and following careful consideration, even when his natural inclination is to avoid putting Americans in harm's way" (Holland, 2019:p.47). Obama largely achieved the objective of withdrawing Americans from the region by officially ending combat operations in Afghanistan and transferring security responsibility from the US and NATO to Afghanistan. "As a modern Jeffersonian, he would avoid full-scale, boots-on-the-ground wars in countries that are very difficult to pacify and reform" (Ibid).

Furthermore, this was not confined to military considerations, as Obama also saw little advantage in investing significant resources to help bring political reform to the MENA, even in a more limited or facilitative capacity, as his approach to Egypt exemplified. From a Jeffersonian approach, Obama's decisions were based on his assessment of the costs and risks of foreign policymaking, and the domestic implications of them, such as provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were not the main incentives for his cautious approach to the MENA. He was likely driven by his own beliefs and subsequently used his agency to move America's foreign policy approach towards his perception of the international system and national interest . However, how he moved the national interest away from the region through publicly conveying that the US would not forcefully act in promoting its perceived values was perhaps motivated by domestic public opinion. Obama's deliberative approach towards Egypt possibly exemplified this as he aimed to become less involved in the MENA, whilst claiming that America retained its conceptualised national identity as a global leader by facilitating, rather than building democracy. Resembling a Jeffersonian tradition, "democracy promotion has also been shaped by Obama's overall retrenchment strategy and his wish to avoid too costly commitments abroad, especially in the MENA, reinforced by the decision to undertake a strategic rebalancing to Asia" (Bouchet, 2019:p.152).

Obama's stemming of American decline by addressing the Vietnam Syndrome and China

Obama's policy to rebalance towards Asia was confirmed by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian-Pacific Affairs, Kurt Campbell. He explained that "we've been on a little bit of a Middle East detour over the last ten years" (2011) and refocusing on Asia became a more pressing strategic concern. However, with America's unipolar moment declared as over, and America's reduced involvement in the MENA as well as China's increasing power, debate about American decline resurfaced similar to post-Vietnam (Soare, 2013:p.52). The concern about China was part of the broader decline debate that had re-emerged after the failure in Iraq, through questions being raised about whether a Chinese superpower might threaten, or even eclipse US power, economically. Although circumstances of China's rise partly changed America's foreign policy priorities to focus on economic rather than military threats, Obama was nonetheless able to use this to his advantage in relation to managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. China's economic threat allowed Obama to demote the debate about the use of military intervention below protecting American power through its economic interests. There were concerns about China's increasingly military belligerence in the South China Sea. However, direct US military involvement was not considered as a viable instrument to respond with. Consequently, there were lower risks of provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome because economic, rather than military tools, have become more significant in this rivalry.

Nevertheless, the question about China's rise and America's diminished influence in the MENA were connected to the larger discussion about potential American decline. The declinist school is well established and received attention through Paul Kennedy's work during the latter stages of the Cold War, when he argued that American power would wane over time, and it could either manage the process prudently, or accelerate it through denial and overextension (1987). Similar arguments were made after the failure in Iraq and the Great Recession. Adam Quinn acknowledged that China's rise should be treated with some caution, since it "still has a daunting mountain to climb in terms of financial clout, political will and international legitimacy before it could rival America" (2011:p.807). However, Quinn argued that American decline defined Obama's presidency and that "President Obama's approach, defined by restraint and awareness of limits, makes him ideologically and temperamentally well suited to the former course in a way that, to cite one example, his predecessor was not. He is, in short, a good president to inaugurate an era of managed decline" (p.822). Similarly, Fawaz Gerges claimed that "Obama and his aides had a vivid sense of American decline relative to the new rising powers and wanted to rebalance foreign policy priorities away from the Middle East to the Pacific Ocean and Asia" (2013:p.305). Hamid also opined that "the Obama administration's passivity during the Arab spring have been many, but perhaps none is more helpful in explaining it than the notion of 'declinism'" (2011). David Fitzgerald and

David Ryan argued that Obama's lack of influence in the Arab Spring and limited role, meant that "the rapid outbreak of protests in the Middle East and the seeming inability of the administration to influence their outcome either way indicated a decline in US strength and influence" (2014:p.95).

The Obama administration accepted that the unipolar moment was over, just as neoconservatives who wanted to take advantage of it said would eventually happen (Krauthammer, 1990). Hillary Clinton acknowledged this in her speech launching the NSS, explaining that "we are looking to turn a multipolar world into a multi-partner world" (2010). The term "non-polar" world has been used to describe the same type of international system (Haas, 2008). Christopher Layne argued that "the Unipolar Era has ended, and the Unipolar Exit has begun. The Great Recession has underscored the reality of US decline and only 'denialists' can bury their heads in the sand and maintain otherwise" (2012:p.202). Parts of the American public had the impression that America was in decline and falling behind China. Pew Research Center found that 44% believed that China was the world's leading economy, compared to 39% who believed that America was (2013). Therefore, "Obama's problem seemed to be that of somehow managing American global transition without being seen as succumbing to the acceptance of decline" (Ashbee & Dumbrell, 2017:p.7).

However, the end of the unipolar moment that US foreign policymakers acknowledged, did not necessarily represent American decline as Layne suggests. The end of unipolarity does not equate to absolute American decline, as it remained on atop of an international order, albeit with emerging powers. Furthermore, Obama addressed China's threat to US power and potential decline through TPP. The trade deal was "interpreted as a way for the US to prevent China from rewriting the regional economic system according to its own rules and values" (Turner, 2019:p.185). Obama conveyed its purpose to do this, writing in The Washington Post that "America should write the rules…the United States, not countries like China, should write them" (2016). "In a sense, the TPP had become a 'lynchpin' of the rebalance to Asia" (Bierre-Poulsen, 2017:p.318). Furthermore, America's reduced presence in the MENA did not inflict decline in America's overall power in the international system. Certainly, America was experiencing relative decline, especially in the MENA as Gerges highlighted, but Obama took steps to stem decline rather than embrace it as Quinn suggested. Contrary to Gerges's and Fitzgerald and Ryan's view that America was in absolute decline through retrenching from the MENA, Obama was addressing decline by reallocating resources towards Asia where China was visibly an emerging power.

Moreover, Obama had a "recognition and acceptance of the limits of US agency in the political development of other countries" (Bouchet, 2019:p.154), particularly in the MENA. Though democracy promotion is a constant feature of US foreign policy, with varying levels being prioritised,

"the exception for a long time was the MENA, where security interests led successive administrations to rule out upsetting the regional order (Ibid). Beyond examples such as America's involvement in the 1953 Iranian coup, or the 1991 Gulf War (both of which re-established the respective status-quos), America has rarely successfully brought democratic reform into the volatile region, hence its pragmatic approach. George W. Bush was actually the exception instead of the norm in his unsuccessful ambition to build democracy from the ground up. Obama aimed to restore the pre-Bush US approach to the MENA, as a Jeffersonian because a state will pursue a more restricted, cautious, foreign policy if it has experienced a decline in relative power (Marsh, 2012). Furthermore, Obama's departure from Bush's foreign policy approach by exercising greater restraint in the MENA, particularly towards using military intervention, was part of the rebalancing towards Asia, where more pressing threats to American power, such as China, existed. Therefore, "Obama's policy in fact constituted a challenge to declinism rather than an effort to 'manage' decline" (Moran, 2017:p.279).

Finally, Obama's addressing of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was central to prevent decline by rebuilding trust with an American public after the Iraq War to improve confidence in promoting its own ideals globally. This confidence was further weakened by the recession, and Obama's NSS emphasised that, "in the long run, the welfare of the American people will determine America's strength in the world" (2010:p.9). Therefore, Obama exemplified his Jeffersonian values that "worry that their preservation at home requires an acknowledgement of the vulnerability of the United States" (Holland, 2019:p.42). Mead explained that for Jeffersonians, "war costs money, piling up debts that concentrate power in the central government and forced most of the population to labor and pay taxes" (2002:p.186). For Obama, this meant focusing on the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by restoring trust with Americans in its democratic system before promoting it abroad, by underscoring that they were considered in foreign policy decision-making in fiscally constraining circumstances.

The Obama Doctrine: 'Bending history towards justice' in response to the Vietnam Syndrome

This section discusses how Obama's preoccupation with the consequences of Bush's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq brought challenges when articulating a foreign policy doctrine. This led to some questioning whether he even had one. Some argue that presidents usually become consumed by structural constraints instead of being able to implement any meaningful or distinctive foreign policy doctrine. Gideon Rose argued that Obama's foreign policy approach reflected that the president's role in foreign policymaking mostly involves working within the circumstances that they entered, rather than developing a distinctive doctrine, like "a member of a relay team or a middle relief pitcher: somebody who takes over from a predecessor, does a hard job for a while and then passes

things on to the next guy" (2015:p.2). Similarly, rather than implementing a specific foreign policy approach, some scholars argue that presidents can become part of cyclical strategies of maximalism and retrenchment. "When the maximalist overreaches, the retrencher comes in to pick up the pieces. Then when retrenchment fails to rebuild American power, meet new challenges, or compete effectively, the maximalist reappears, ready with ambitious formulas for doing so" (Sestanovich, 2014:p.9). When discussing Stephen Sestanovich's 'retrencher/maximalist' paradigm, Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister highlight that, "here George W. Bush is cast as the maximalist, succumbing to over-reach, with Obama as the retrencher, scaling back and rebuilding" (2017:p.215). This further echoes this chapter's analysis of Obama's initial undoing of the consequences of Bush's foreign policy approach before developing his own doctrine.

Consequently, commentators such as Michael Hirsh claimed that "the real Obama doctrine is to have no doctrine at all" (2011). Hirsh went on to assert that "we're talking about 'No-Drama Obama', after all. This is a president who, despite his soaring rhetoric during the 2008 campaign and his reputation as a crusading liberal since then, has been consumed with caution during his two years in office, especially in foreign policy" (Ibid). Obama himself dismissed the merits of a wide-ranging doctrine. He warned to "not to take 'this' particular situation and then try to project some sort of Obama doctrine that we're going to apply in a cookie-cutter fashion across the board." (2011)

Nevertheless, presidents have agency in US foreign policymaking, so it makes a difference who the individual in office is. Although structural factors inevitably influence what a president can do, the individuals can nonetheless develop strategies to at least partially shape America's overall foreign policy approach. Obama's Jeffersonian outlook comprised his perception of national interest, threats to America, and a cautious view of the likelihood of promoting US ideals abroad. This caution was especially sceptical towards promoting US ideals through military intervention and his concerns for the consequences of such action for domestic political stability such as reigniting the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Presidents have personal beliefs, experiences, certain approaches to governing (Preston, 2001:p.9), and they will have different levels of responsiveness to public opinion that makes their foreign policy approaches different. Obama was no different, and despite his reluctance to be drawn into debate about a doctrine, scholars have analysed his specific foreign policy approach.

Daniel Drezner opined that the Obama Doctrine was twofold: "the first strategy, multilateral retrenchment, was designed to curtail the United States' overseas commitments, restore its standing in the world, and shift burdens onto global partners...the second, emergent grand strategy is focused on counterpunching" (2011:p.58), to signal continued resolve to rivals whilst adopting a more

modest foreign policy approach. Similarly, Andreas Krieg suggested that "the core principle of the Obama Doctrine is burden-sharing, both strategically and operationally" (2016:p104) through state and non-state surrogates such as local proxies in warzones and increased technological weaponry to decrease ground troop levels in the MENA. This was particularly important to Obama's approach to military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome within public opinion. Donette Murray argued that the Obama Doctrine focuses on a belief in cooperation to deal with international crises, and the assertion of a pragmatic, multifaceted, limited strategy to deal with such crises; one which is sensitive to the longer-term implications of action (2013). Colin Dueck suggested that in Obama's foreign policy approach, "three features particular features stand out: first a highly centralized decision-making process, converging on the White House; second, a president tolerant of policy ambiguity, sometimes to the point of excess; and third, a keen sensitivity to domestic political considerations" (2015:p.145). Furthermore, Dueck argued that the Obama Doctrine was "a strategy of US accommodation and retrenchment, namely, to reorientate American resources and attention away from national security concerns and towards the expansion of progressive domestic reforms" (p.151-2).

As Dueck highlighted, Obama was sensitive to domestic considerations, especially towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in his approach to military intervention. However, the Obama Doctrine was more than reactive counterpunching, unideological pragmatism, or burden-sharing through making foreign policy a management exercise tailored to suit his domestic policy interests that primarily used ambiguity as a strategy. Obama's timidity to articulate a doctrine was not because he refused to give it much thought, or that he wanted to marginalise it behind domestic policies such as healthcare and the economy. His foreign policy approach was not the triangulation associated with Bill Clinton, which his advisor Dick Morris said, "blended the best of each party's views but also transcended them to constitute a third force in the debate" (1999:p.80). Instead, Obama took time to develop a doctrine because he gave a lot of thought about what it even means to have one. The fact that American presidents use the term 'doctrine' to convey their foreign policy principles has religious and moralistic connotations. But America's moral and global leadership, however accurate this description usually is, was objectively damaged by the Iraq War.

As a result, Obama did not consider brandishing a so-called US foreign policy doctrine lightly. Obama criticised what he regarded as conventional thinking in America's foreign policy approach amongst policymakers, including senior members of his administration. He argued that "for them, a responsible foreign policy meant continuity, predictability, and an unwillingness to stray too far from conventional wisdom. It was this impulse that had led most to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq...they were not inclined to ask whether the bipartisan rush into Iraq indicated the need for a fundamental

overhaul of America's national security framework" (2020:p.311). Obama's reluctance to articulate a doctrine did not mean that he held few foreign policy principles. Instead, Obama believed that America had to significantly rethink how it could credibly adhere to the longstanding ideals it has historically claimed to have. Obama believed that part of the solution was rebuilding the American public's trust and confidence during a time when the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive, and America's global reputation was damaged.

Post-Vietnam, the similarly Jeffersonian president, Carter, believed that America needed to rediscover its moral compass. He declared in an address to Americans that the country was experiencing a "crisis in confidence" (1979). Carter overtly questioned America's moral standing, and believed that its power, as considerable as it is, has limits, having been tarnished by domestic political scandal through Watergate, and internationally by its withdrawal from Vietnam. He said that "we were taught that our armies were always invincible, and our causes were always just, only to suffer the agony of Vietnam. We respected the presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate" (Ibid). The concern about the United States' moral standing and uniqueness was not confined to liberals, as the neoconservative, Daniel Bell similarly warned in his essay title alone of, 'The End of American Exceptionalism', shortly after the Vietnam War, but more as a call to reinvigorate US power. Bell wrote, "today the belief in American exceptionalism has vanished with the end of empire, the weakening of power, and the loss of faith in the nation's future" (1975). Ultimately, the introspection that Carter encouraged instead received the backlash of Reagan's Jacksonian nationalism with his Wilsonian rhetoric around democracy promotion. Reagan and the neoconservatives were unapologetic about America's international actions and derided critics of military intervention as being part of a 'Vietnam Syndrome'.

In contrast, the failure of the Iraq War posed deeper questions about whether to use any military intervention America's foreign policy approach compared to debates about how to use it more effectively post-Vietnam. David Hasting Dunn argued that the Iraq War posed more profound questions, though this research continues to use the term, 'Vietnam Syndrome', because the US public reaction to the Iraq War was a development of the same attitudes. Dunn argues that "the Iraq Syndrome therefore went much deeper than the Vietnam Syndrome in that it concerned not just the issues that gave rise to debates about the political control of the military—how the military could ensure that it was not misused, and how it could ensure that the interventions it undertook were optimized for success. Instead, it brought into question the very idea whether it was possible for political leaders to know whether any intervention would succeed" (2017:p.191). Hence, greater introspection surfaced in light of the Iraq War about America's global leadership, and what role the

American public has amongst policymakers in establishing the use of intervention to promote their perceived ideals.

Parallels were drawn between Carter and Obama's presidency. Mead warned of a 'Carter Syndrome', arguing that "like Carter in the 1970s, Obama comes from the old fashioned Jeffersonian wing of the Democratic Party, and the strategic goal of his foreign policy is to reduce America's costs and risks overseas by limiting U.S. commitments wherever possible" (2010:p.61). However, a key distinction was that Obama encouraged self-examination towards military intervention by approaching the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome with a more hopeful tone. The president occupies "a unique space in the American symbolic universe…as the nation's narrator-in-chief" (Krebs, 2015:p.49), which Obama firmly grasped, and was able to use better than Carter as a more gifted orator. Rather than emphasising crisis like Carter, despite the very real problems that America was facing, Obama underscored his belief in America's unique ability to change for the better and that this was a moment it would meet that challenge. "Obama doesn't just love the United States for what it is. He loves what it should—and can—be" (Mead, 2010:p.64). As a Jeffersonian who believed that democracy promotion had to be simultaneously nourished at home as well as promoted abroad where possible, Obama believed that he had a compelling story about the progress that America strives to make to constantly improve itself to achieve, as he said, "a more perfect union" (2008), in reference to the preamble of the US Constitution (1787). Therefore, whilst a critical view could accuse Obama of indecisiveness, he was attempting to engage more deeply with bigger questions about how America could improve even more as a global leader.

He focused on his belief that America can change when addressing the problems caused by the Iraq War, such as disillusion amongst Americans. When conveying this message, Obama echoed Martin Luther King's quotation, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice" (1968), that had originated from a sermon given by the abolitionist, Theodore Parker (1853). Obama had the quote stitched into a custom-made rug for the Oval Office (2010). Its message became a feature of his presidency in his effort to bring change in American politics steadily. Obama notably quoted it in his speech to mark the fiftieth anniversary of King's 1963, 'I have a Dream' speech (2013). Nevertheless, it also guided his foreign policy approach because he believed that America had to practice the politics it preached to promote its ideals abroad, and Obama had confidence in its ability to change and improve practicing them.

Race does not often feature in analysis of Obama's foreign policy approach. Nonetheless, his background as the first African-American president, on the centre-left, should be considered when evaluating how he saw America's moral position in the world and the US public's role when

considering military intervention. Obama received some criticism for not overtly referencing race in his approaches to domestic or foreign policy, and Jenifer Senior claimed that this represented a "paradox of the first black president" (2015). However, "Obama has not needed to speak about race explicitly in order for race to manifest in his speeches, unlike his predecessors" (Johnson, 2017:p.171). Obama's view on race in America and its progress also partially reflected his Jeffersonian foreign policymaking that believed America's domestic politics mattered to its foreign policymaking. This was through his belief that because America could elect an African-American president with its deep-rooted problems of racism that by no means consequently ended, then it could reform its foreign policy approach over time and more credibly promote its ideals abroad gradually. When conveying this, Obama emphasised that change in America's domestic and international politics is complex and nonlinear. "The path that this country has taken has never been a straight line. We zig and zag" (2016). Just as progress on racial equality has taken time, the same was true to Obama about reforming America's foreign policy approach. He believed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was an important part of achieving that, because the public has historically been significant to achieving political change in America domestically and internationally.

Obama's sensitivity of America's fraught and nonlinear history also demonstrated his complex relationship with American exceptionalism, and his approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that considered American public opinion more in foreign policymaking. Obama was coy about his views on American exceptionalism, as it heavily featured in Bush's foreign policy approach, and such status of America became questioned more since the Iraq War. Obama's response to whether he believed in American exceptionalism, and whether it made America uniquely qualified to lead the world, was, "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism" (2009). The evasive answer referred more to an empirical view of exceptionalism, whereby every country is naturally 'exceptional' in their differences. It also implicitly alluded to the debate about decline, considering that Obama named two nations that had been large global powers. In the case of Britain, during the nineteenth century, and Greece, during ancient civilisation, and both ultimately fell. However, the normative elements are more central to the debate about American exceptionalism and whether Americans have the almost divine duty to promote its perceived ideals globally.

Obama's ambiguity towards America exceptionalism was criticised, especially by the political right. "Critics on the right charged Obama with conducting an abject and nationally embarrassing 'apology tour', in which the president failed to sufficiently venerate the US, and not only concede America's historic wrongs and missteps but also denied the reality of American exceptionalism—the notion that America had a distinctive, and even unique, God-given destiny" (Singh, 2012:p.57). The

American right can convey an interpretation of American exceptionalism that the perceived superiority and morality of America means it can do little wrong. This was evident in Mitt Romney's book, 'No Apology: The Case for American Greatness', in which he accused Obama's foreign policy approach as a world tour "apologizing for America" (2010), and that American exceptionalism should be embraced, which was a key theme of his 2012 election campaign against Obama as the Republican nominee. "The ominous specter of relative US decline brought anxiety over the validity of the American exceptionalism to the fore of the presidential election of 2012" (Restad, 2014:p.231). During the campaign, Romney stated that, "America must lead the world…I believe we are an exceptional country, with a unique destiny and role in the world" (2011). Additionally, Shelby Steele, a Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution claimed that "Obama did not explicitly run on an anti-exceptionalism platform. Yet once he was elected it became clear that his idea of how and where to apply presidential power was shaped precisely by this brand of liberalism" (2011). Therefore, whilst the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that Obama cultivated in light of the Iraq War became factor in his foreign policymaking, it was also met with familiar conservative criticism seen post-Vietnam.

Nonetheless, Obama's foreign policy approach strongly believed in American exceptionalism . He perhaps recognised that it is based on a "seemingly paradoxical idea of a state being exceptional by virtue of uniquely being built on universal principles" (Bouchet, 2013:p.37). But Obama's interpretation contended that America has to live up to the exceptional virtues of democracy and liberty, and that it can, and must improve itself at home and abroad to successfully promote them. This was a significant fault-line between Obama and conservatives in the American exceptionalism debate and how he responded to public opinion. Conservatives' belief in American exceptionalism often produced rhetoric that argued America was already the greatest nation and it therefore did not need to change, or apologise, as Romney exemplified. Contrastingly, Obama's interpretation of American exceptionalism was that the nation can always improve, and that its story of bending towards justice is constant by further strengthening how it practices its ideals at home and abroad. Obama's belief that the United States could further perfect its ideals reflected his Jeffersonian principles. "Like Wilsonians, Jeffersonians believe that the American Revolution continues. One believes that the United States is a country that has had a revolution; the other believes that America is a revolutionary country" (Mead, 2002:p.178). Obama believed that the American people and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were key to the continual effort to fulfilling the ideals that the US promotes and improving its role of being a global force for good.

Obama first showed signs of having a foreign policy doctrine, particularly regarding his approach towards military intervention, in his 2009 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. He won unexpectedly, when he was only nine months into his presidency, and Obama had yet to articulate how he would conduct his foreign policy approach in his own distinctive way, let alone help to make the world a more peaceful place. Obama himself was surprised when learning that he had won, recalling that when his White House Press Secretary, Robert Gibbs informed him about this news, he responded saying, "for what"(2020:p.439)? The Nobel Peace Prize Committee explained its decision was made because of Obama's "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation. The Committee has attached special importance to Obama's vision of work for a world without nuclear weapons" (2009). Obama spoke of the need for nuclear disarmament in his acceptance speech, calling "to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and to seek a world without them" (2009). Nevertheless, it had a notable emphasis on the importance of understanding the right conditions to engage in military intervention and war, as a way bring sustainable peace.

Obama highlighted the irony that he was receiving the award at a time when he was "the Commander-in-Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars" (Ibid) in Afghanistan and Iraq. With that in mind, Obama implicitly addressed the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome by outlining the conditions for when America should use military instruments in its foreign policy approach. Obama commended historical political leaders that advocated peaceful and nonviolent methods to achieve their aims, such as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi:

But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason (Ibid).

Nevertheless, Obama believed that America's rationale and conduct in warfare was also important in order to maintain and improve its global leadership. Therefore, his message to the American public, particularly the section that were part of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, as well as the world, was the importance of engaging in just wars. He noted that "the concept of a 'just war' emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defense; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence" (Ibid). However, whilst Obama echoed just war principles (Walzer, 1977),

when outlining his foreign policy approach to partly communicate to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, this can be better understood with as a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach. As a Jeffersonian, Obama believed it was that America needed democratic political stability domestically to lead as an example to emulate before promoting it abroad. Obama believed it was in the national interest to fight wars justly, when involved in military intervention to fulfil the United States' ideational role as a global leader. He stated:

Where force is necessary, we have a moral and strategic interest in binding ourselves to certain rules of conduct. And even as we confront a vicious adversary that abides by no rules, I believe the United States of America must remain a standard bearer in the conduct of war. That is what makes us different from those whom we fight. That is a source of our strength (2009).

From a Jeffersonian viewpoint, Obama believed that strong American moral leadership in its foreign policy approach is not only for altruistic reasons, but for the national interest to enhance its power in the international system. Obama broadly accepted that conflict is inevitable, having been influenced by Rheinhold Niebuhr, from the school of Christian realism ,who he called his "favorite philosopher" (2007). Obama said that "I take idea that there's serious evil in the world…and we should be humble and modest in our belief that we can eliminate those things. But we shouldn't use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction. I take away…the sense that we have to make these efforts knowing they are hard, and not swinging from naïve idealism to bitter realism" (Ibid).

Niebuhr criticised pacifism, arguing that "since reason is always, to some degree, the servant of interest in a social situation, social injustice cannot be resolved by moral and rational suasion alone, as the educator and social scientist usually believes. Conflict is inevitable, and in this conflict power must be challenged by power" (1932:p.XIV-XV). Obama echoed these sentiments when he explained that he could not be led by King and Ghandhi's nonviolent principles alone. Nevertheless, he believed that there were moral limits of military power. Niebuhr, for example, criticized the Allied bombing of cities and questioned the use of nuclear weapons by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After World War II, he supported the efforts to contain Communism, but he strongly opposed the Vietnam War, and thought that US involvement in unwinnable land wars in Asia was unwise (Tooley, 2009).

Therefore, Obama believed that America needed to be a credible moral leader to enhance and maintain its international power and influence. He explained that this drove his opposition to Bush's policies, saying "that is why I prohibited torture. That is why I ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed. And that is why I have reaffirmed America's commitment to abide by the Geneva Conventions. We lose ourselves when we compromise the very ideals that we fight to

defend. And we honor—we honor those ideals by upholding them not when it's easy, but when it is hard" (Ibid), reverberating Kennedy's 'we choose to go to the moon speech', and accepting big challenges, "not because they are easy, but because they are hard" (1962). Indeed, Obama directly quoted Kennedy in the speech when stressing the importance of bringing gradual change through international institutions, stating that "a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions" (2009). Nevertheless, Obama exemplified his more Jeffersonian foreign policy approach compared to Kennedy's Wilsonian one through advocating for America to further improve its own practices before readily promoting its ideals abroad. Furthermore, Obama further distanced himself from Bush by championing international institutions and multilateralism, to not only be the approach to military action, but also nuclear disarmament as opposed to unilateral militarism. Obama stated, "with the advent of the nuclear age, it became clear to victor and vanquished alike that the world needed institutions to prevent another world war" (2009). Despite Obama's predecessor's moralistic language, Bush clear was not interested in the limitations of force outlined in 'just war' theory when he decided to circumvent diplomacy and pre-emptively invade and occupy Iraq in 2003" (Felice, 2010:p.49). Obama's rhetoric also mirrored views of large sections of the America public. Even with Bush's moral failures in his foreign policy approach that provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, most Americans believed that they are exceptional, with 80% saying that "the US has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world" (Gallup, 2010). The partisan statistics showed that there was a broad consensus, with 73% of Democrats, 77% of Independents and 91% of Republicans sharing this view (Ibid). Furthermore, 66% of all Americans believed that America has "a special responsibility to be the leading nation in world affairs" (Ibid).

Obama most explicitly outlined his foreign policy doctrine, and particularly his approach towards military intervention, in his 2014 West Point speech. By then, he was approaching the latter stages of his presidency and had more experience and time to develop his foreign policy approach and its objectives that considered international and domestic factors. Although he did not specifically mention the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, in US foreign policymaking, he directly addressed role of American public opinion in the constant debate about how America should promote its perceived ideals. Indeed Obama acknowledged that the debate has existed since American independence amongst the Founding Fathers:

This question isn't new. At least since George Washington served as Commander-in-Chief, there have been those who warned against foreign entanglements that do not touch directly on our security or economic well-being. Today, according to self-described realists, conflicts in Syria or Ukraine or the Central African Republic are not ours to solve. Not surprisingly, after costly wars and

continuing challenges at home, that view is shared by many Americans. A different view, from interventionists on the left and right, says we ignore these conflicts at our own peril; that America's willingness to apply force around the world is the ultimate safeguard against chaos, and America's failure to act in the face of Syrian brutality or Russian provocations not only violates our conscience, but invites escalating aggression in the future (2014).

Obama was referring geopolitical conflicts across different regions: the Syrian civil war in light of the Arab Spring (Laub, 2023), Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea territory that had happened only months before this speech (Pifer, 2020), and the Central African Republic Civil War that begun in 2012 (2023). On the broader question of military intervention, he displayed awareness of the longstanding debate over its use and role in America's foreign policy approach and promotion its ideals. He implicitly acknowledged the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the questions of its use when the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had brought human and economic costs, as well as the concerns of interventionists. Nevertheless, Obama rejected isolationism, stating that "it is absolutely true that in the 21st Century, American isolationism is not an option. If nuclear materials are not secure, that could pose a danger in American cities. As the Syrian civil war spills across borders, the capacity of battle-hardened groups to come after us increases. Regional aggression that goes unchecked - in southern Ukraine, the South China Sea, or anywhere else in the world—will ultimately impact our allies, and could draw in our military" (2014). Obama therefore recognised that there are potential threats to American power in the international system that he refused to ignore. However, Obama demonstrated his Jeffersonian beliefs through his caution towards using militaristic methods of deterring threats and promoting ideals. He summarised this point stating that, "US military action cannot be the only—or even primary—component of our leadership in every instance. Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail" (Ibid). Similarly again to the Clinton Doctrine as discussed in chapter three when Obama was a presidential candidate, he maintained that "a principle I put forward at the outset of my presidency—the United States will use military force, unilaterally if necessary, when our core interests demand it", and that his preference on broader international challenges, "we must mobilise allies and partners to take collective action. We must broaden our tools to include diplomacy and development; sanctions and isolation; appeals to international law and—if just, necessary, and effective—multilateral military action" (Ibid). This exemplified Obama's Jeffersonian restraint, whereby he would instinctively approach foreign policy diplomatically and use military intervention as a last resort with international partners when possible and outside of direct US interests.

Furthermore, Obama most emphatically expressed his belief in American exceptionalism by advocating for America to not only adhere to the virtues it claims to have, but to lead in their

promotion by following international law in its foreign policy approach. Obama stated, "I believe in American exceptionalism with every fibre of my being. But what makes us exceptional is not our ability to flout international norms and the rule of law; it's our willingness to affirm them through our actions" (Ibid). Therefore, Obama's "options do not extend to whether to engage or not, but rather how best to perform America's unique role in the historical arc of freedom's evolution" (Holland, 2017:p.45). It again demonstrated Obama's Jeffersonian instincts in his foreign policy approach. Democracy promotion was an objective, however, Obama was less optimistic about the efficacy of military intervention to achieve this, especially if it would strain domestic political stability, by provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Obama as a 'modern Jeffersonian' in practice

This section examines how Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach affected his consideration of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome at a policy-level. Obama's foreign policy approach as a 'modern Jeffersonian' undoubtedly heavily considered costs and risks, especially towards large-scale military intervention, but he was by no means risk-averse. "Jeffersonian foreign policy is no bed of roses" (Mead, 2010). Holland argued about Obama's foreign policy approach of "fearing and actively avoiding the consequences of military conflict can readily lead to accusations of wimpishness, not least in the context of highly charged and partisan domestic landscape" (2017:p.45).

However, Holland explained that "accusations of timidity on the part of Obama are misleading and have been frequently (justifiably) deflected for three reasons. First, Obama achieved that which Bush had failed: he got Osama bin Laden, whose extrajudicial assassination was both the remit of Jeffersonian cost-benefit calculation and the ultimate tonic for vengeful Jacksonian America" (Jarvis & Holland, 2014). Moreover, Obama's focus on terrorist threats to the national interest further reflected his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach, as Thomas Jefferson has been considered as the first US president to fight America's first war against terrorists in the 1801-05 First Barbary War (Turner, 2003). Obama's mission also carried significant risks, namely, that it involved military action in Pakistan, a country that had been a long-term US ally since the Cold War that was officially helping to combat al-Qaeda (Soherwordi, 2010). Hillary Clinton recalled Obama's thorough approach, and that he "went around the room and asked for everyone's recommendation. The President and I are both lawyers, and I had learnt over time how to appeal to his highly analytical mind. So I methodically laid out the case, including the potential damage with Pakistan and the risks of a blown operation. But, I concluded, the chance to get bin Laden was worth it" (2014:p.182).

Panetta when speaking for this research, discussing his role in the operation as the CIA Director, also noted that "I think it was more the issue of what are the risks, and what are the

possibilities that the Pakistanis might find out about and potentially engage in combat, and you know, how do we get those individuals out quickly if that happens" (2021). The concerns about American public opinion were not significant for the operation itself. After all, the possibility, and ultimately, the success of killing bin Laden was almost certain to be popular. Nevertheless, the limited scale and concerns about the risks of military action against bin Laden reflected Obama's Jeffersonian preference for small operations with specific objectives, as opposed to large ground troop intervention.

"Second, Obama is not a president solely motivated by the avoidance of armed conflict. Rather, he is a president who will commit American forces to action, in a manner carefully arrived at, when he considers to cause to be just and practical" (Holland, 2017:p.45). Panetta's account of the bin Laden operation, exemplified Obama's Jeffersonian calculating, but ultimately decisive approach when other senior administration members were cautious, such as Gates. Panetta recalled that:

It wasn't just Gates; it was Vice President Biden as well as others that raised some of those concerns. Gates himself will tell you as he told me that his primary concern was a repetition of what happened in the Carter administration, with the helicopters that were going in to conduct a hostage rescue mission… I had a tremendous amount of confidence in the capabilities in the special forces because it was the kind missions that there were doing sometimes, six, seven, eight times a night in Afghanistan…Ultimately it was the president's decision to go, and as Gates himself said, it was probably one the gutsiest decisions made by a president, that we should proceed with that mission (2021).

"Third, Obama has been an internationalist president. Far from focusing exclusively on the creation of a more perfect union at home, Obama has seen himself as a uniquely positioned global statesman, leading the world's only superpower, in a dangerous and increasingly interconnected world" (Holland, 2019:p.45). Obama may have acknowledged the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, but he also recognised that his importance as the commander-in-chief to protect Americans, and though he catered to more palatable military action for the American public, he was not shy about using it. Therefore. "in an effort to avoid putting boots on the ground, the Obama administration has relied heavily on manned and unmanned air power" (Krieg, 2016:p.107). Obama "massively extended the armed drone programme, with significant effects on US kinetic engagement in the Middle East" (Ibid). According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, "563 strikes, largely by drones, targeted Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen during Obama's two terms, compared to 57 strikes under Bush. Between 384 and 807 civilians were killed in those countries" (2017). The consequences of collateral damage undoubtedly raised questions about Obama's commitment to just war and

proportionality. However, Obama's use of drone warfare implicitly catered for the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by avoiding the risks of fatalities of US soldiers. Indeed, this further reflected Obama's Jeffersonian approach, by using military options that reduced costs and risks as he perceived them.

Additionally, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach showed that his drone warfare was primarily driven by his perception of the national interest to protect America from terrorism. Obama considered internal factors in his decision-making by pursuing the national interest in an acceptable way to the public that would not severely provoke the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Unmanned aerial combat vehicles have been deployed in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria (Kube & Miklaszewski, 2014), against Gaddafi in Libya (Barnes, 2011) al-Qaeda in Yemen (Al Arabiya, 2015) and against al-Shabaab militias in Somalia (Turse, 2012:p.30). Therefore, "whilst it is true that the drone campaign raises significant questions as to its moral and legal status, not to mention the wider effectiveness of reducing the terrorist threat to the United States (McCrisken, 2011), it is also the case that it has allowed the administration to present itself as directly addressing the terrorist threat without having to resort to the types of large-scale boots on the ground undertaking that characterised the Bush administration" (Kitchen, 2019:p.18). Moreover, the American public broadly supported drone strikes at 58%, according to the Pew Research Center, with only 31% expressing great concern that they could lead to retaliation against Americans (2015). This showed that Obama had some success managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Obama also managed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through some diplomatic achievements and a more multilateral foreign policy approach that emphasised less militarism. The change towards this diplomatic direction was exemplified in Obama's second term by "at least three examples of 'change we can believe in': the Iranian nuclear framework, announced in April 2015, following the 2013 interim agreement; the rapprochement with Cuba (announced by Obama in December 2014); and the Paris climate change agreement (December 2015)...all three have at least a reasonable claim to be seen in terms of game-changing policy shift, as well as representing a very significant departure from the policies of the preceding administration" (Ashbee & Dumbrell, 2017:p.9). The JCPOA was Obama's flagship foreign policy legacy, and it reflected his Jeffersonian approach to acting in his perception of the national interest, by reducing nuclear weapons capabilities of an adversary diplomatically. Iran was amongst Bush's 'axis of evil', but Obama demonstrated that he could reduce nuclear weapons with fewer risks and costs than military intervention as Bush allegedly attempted to (as preventative actions).

Furthermore, it showed that Obama was not risk-averse, or afraid of confrontation. Not only were Republicans staunchly opposed negotiations or a deal, but Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, which is America's historically closest ally in the region, was scathing. Their views were made clear when the Republican controlled Senate controversially invited Netanyahu to speak, in which he lamented of "a very bad deal" (2015) with Iran because he claimed it would not stop their development of nuclear weapons. "In fact, the administration negotiated the agreement in full awareness that Israel had on more than one occasion come close to attacking Iran, an attack that would almost certainly provoke a conflict into which the USA would inexorably be dragged" (Hurst, 2017:p.294). Therefore, whilst the diplomatic route naturally avoided provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically, there was a risk of America being dragged into another Middle Eastern conflict that would have been much messier than the Iraq War for the region and America.

Richard Nephew was the lead sanctions expert in the negotiations from August 2013 until December 2014. His view towards Israel's opposition "began sympathetic and then much more critical of the criticism and its public nature…Their criticism was often groundless—e.g. the idea that the JCPOA would provide Iran $40B per six months in sanctions relief, which was a totally baseless number that I literally disproved by walking through the elements with then Minister Yuval Steinitz…It was/is a good deal for its time. It merited support. But pointing out its flaws is–in my view–a sign of integrity and honesty that I don't think merits apology". (2022). Meridor, Steinitz's predecessor as the Intelligence Minister, also gave cautious praise, stating, "if I remember correctly, they might have at around 38 tonnes of enriched uranium and then went down to only 2 or 300 kilograms. They agreed to draw down the plutonium process, they agreed to unprecedented things, including inspections by the agency of the UN. And if you look at the process of development of the Iranian development of nuclear capabilities the one big setback that there could have been a better deal. But I think the describing of it as the worst was stupid" (2021). Therefore, despite partisan divisions over the JCPOA, it began a potential process to encourage Iran to eliminate its nuclear weapon capabilities, therefore reducing the dangers of entering another regional war, relatively recently after leaving Iraq. A war between Iran and the US would not only likely caused a quagmire and high fatalities that would have provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, but it could have also risked regional violence on a scale more destabilising than the Iraq War.

Obama's preference of handling traditional adversaries with nonmilitary instruments, nonetheless, attracted criticism, as seen when Russia annexed the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2014. Obama responded with economic sanctions against Russia, of which "there can be little doubt that they have added significant costs to Russia's endeavour, contributing to an annualised decline in Russian growth of 4%" (Kitchen, 2019:p.19). Obama insisted that "now is not the time for bluster…

There are no easy answers, no military solution" (2014), and that "this mobilization of world opinion and international institutions served as a counterweight to Russian propaganda and Russian troops" (2014). Obama's decision to only send non-lethal aid to Ukraine such as body armour and helmets (Gollom, 2022), rather than help its government prepare for more possible attacks with weapons, received criticism. In 2015, a joint report by the Atlantic Council, the Chicago Council and the Brookings Institution argued that "the West needs to bolster deterrence in Ukraine by raising the risks and costs to Russia of any renewed major offensive" (p.1). This criticism has validity considering that Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Dunn went further by arguing that Obama's use of diplomatic pressure rather than any form of lethal military support, reflected that he had succumbed to attitudes of the Iraq/Vietnam Syndrome. Dunn claimed that Obama's emphasis on economic sanctions, rather than military aid, "failed to acknowledge that such an approach had no tools to reverse the annexation of Crimea, or stop further destabilization of areas of Ukraine with Russian minority populations…Indeed, the very articulation of a policy where multilateral diplomatic instruments were preferred tools of his statecraft was seen by some critics as likely not only to embolden the actions of Russia in its 'near abroad', but also to increase the likelihood that China would escalate its disputes with its Asian neighbours" (2017:p.203-4).

However, as a Jeffersonian, Obama did not regard Russian control of the Crimea to be a direct threat to US interests that even merited indirect involvement through sending weapons when the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive. It did not harm US power in the international system, and with little domestic appetite for involvement beyond sanctions, Obama believed that Europe needed to take a larger role. Obama's Jeffersonian restraint out of concern for the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome produced a strategy that searched for economic, rather than military consequences. The sanctions weakened Russia but of course they did not deter Putin from launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russia's poor military performance in Ukraine demonstrated that it is not a formidable military power that significantly threatens US power. Nevertheless, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint faced familiar criticism of appearing "weak in the face of great power aggression—as with Russian incursions into Ukraine, or China's territorial claims in the South China Sea" (Lofflmann, 2019:p.183). Therefore, Obama somewhat struggled to balance addressing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome with confronting emerging international threats. Critics, believed Obama displayed weakness, as Lofflmann showed. However, his sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome meant that he prioritised establishing how to use US power, particularly military instruments, most effectively, and sparingly when direct interests were involved.

The legacy of Obama's approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome

This section has been included because the significance of Obama's foreign policy approach, especially towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, can be better understood by briefly analysing what followed under Trump and Biden. Obama's foreign policy approach of restraint towards military intervention endured post-presidency. His successors have in some ways further followed Obama's restraint rather than break from it, though in different ways in their respective foreign policy approaches. This section will not become overly concerned about defining the foreign policy doctrines of Trump and Biden, but it will discuss how they too showed degrees of sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in the debate about US military intervention.

Trump's foreign policy approach during his first term between 2017 and 2021 has been described as being a realist and transactional (Schweller, 2018). However, his behaviour could often be more related to his personal self-interest, whether that was about his own reputation, or electoral prospects rather than conceptualising American self-interests more broadly. He displayed this combination of transactional and personal motives, when he withdrew from the JCPOA, saying that "the Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into" (2018), having made very clear he disliked Obama's involvement in it.

Michelle Bentley, and Maxine David argue that Trump had a doctrine of unpredictability "Trump is, in fact, predictably unpredictable, to the extent that this can be established as a doctrinal approach. This may not comprise doctrine in the classic sense but, the contention here is that the 'classic' ways of seeing and analysing may no longer be appropriate to our time. Indeed, they arguably never have been" (2020). They do address the oxymoronic nature of their analysis, arguing that:

Instead of asking whether Trump has a doctrine or not, why is the question not: why is the current debate incapable of conceptualising unpredictability as a doctrine? The problem lies not with unpredictability, but with existing conceptions and operationalisations of doctrine within current foreign policy analysis; more specifically, that the notion of doctrine as a 'worldview' is not value free. The discipline, regardless of its debates, favours consistency, reliability, and rationality in foreign policy (Ibid)

Unpredictability can undoubtedly be a strategy, and it is not unprecedented in US foreign policy, as seen through Richard Nixon's 'madman theory'. His Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, claimed that Nixon wanted to convey to adversaries that "we can't restrain him when he's angry—and he has his hand on the nuclear button" (1978:p.122). However, this is not a doctrine, and critiquing a

'classic' definition does not change that. Furthermore, in relation to Trump, there is an identifiable enough doctrine that he simply called 'America First', but it was not an isolationist foreign policy approach that the slogan has been historically associated with. Instead it represented most closely a Jacksonian nationalist foreign policy approach that advocated for putting US interests first that is "sensitive to dangers and sceptical of entanglements that lurked beyond the water's edge" (Holland, 2017:p.40). He articulated this in his West Point speech by claiming that "we are ending the era of endless wars. In its place is a renewed, clear-eyed focus on defending America's vital interests. It is not the duty of U.S. troops to solve ancient conflicts in faraway lands that many people have never even heard of. We are not the policemen of the world" (2020).

Trump's transactional approach did not exemplify as much thought into broader questions about America's global role as Obama. Indeed, Mead acknowledged that modern Jacksonianism is largely defined by what it opposes than what it favours. When writing about Trump's Jacksonian leanings at the start of his presidency, he stated that, "at the moment, Jacksonians are skeptical about the United States' policy of global engagement and liberal order building—but more from a lack of trust in the people shaping foreign policy than from a desire for a specific alternative vision" (2017). Nevertheless, Trump showed sensitivity towards sections of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by advocating restraint through a broadly Jacksonian foreign policy approach similar to Bush's pre-9/11, which strongly urged non-intervention abroad unless direct US interests or security were harmed. Trump therefore tried to avoid engaging with international affairs outside direct threats to the US, rather than because of Jeffersonian concerns about the effects of military adventurism on America's democratic wellbeing. Restad argued that Trump's "America First platform shows that he rejects American exceptionalism on two fronts: He does not view the United States as morally superior to other countries and, therefore, he does not view the United States as having a mission to pursue abroad. Trump's definition of American "greatness" is ascriptive and material, rather than ideational and aspirational" (2020:p.77).

However, whilst Trump rejected the idea that America was morally superior with a mission to pursue abroad, his worldview that combined ideas from America First and Jacksonianism, demonstrated an interpretation and appeal to American exceptionalism that emphasised primacy. This materialised by Trump advocating for protecting what he regarded as the culturally and ethnically superior 'folk community' within the United States from external threats such as immigration. "Trump's claim to be a Jacksonian lies in the views he shares with America's seventh president: a narrow and often racialised definition of America(ns) and a deep suspicion of those outside of the polis, who are deemed to threaten economic and physical security" (Holland & Fermor, 2021:p.67). Therefore, Trump's Jacksonian interpretation of American exceptionalism in his

foreign policy approach was more defensive in trying to prevent perceived threats from entering the United States to maintain its superior status and character. This contrasted from Bush's more offensive Jacksonianism that readily used military intervention to address threats.

That is not to say that Trump was averse to using unilateral military action and ignoring the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as part of his Jacksonian "interest-based foreign policy" (Restad, 2020:p.81). He responded for example, to Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons with airstrikes, and attacks to US bases in Iraq by killing the Iranian Major General, Qasem Soleimani in 2020 with a drone strike. This reflected his Jacksonian foreign policy approach since he deemed the Syria strike as necessary to honour America's word of showing that using chemical weapons was unacceptable. Additionally, Trump would not tolerate direct national interests being attacked such as US military bases by the Iranians, as "Jacksonians are not eager to sit at home if there is a worthy fight to be fought" (Ibid), which prompted Soleimani's killing. Trump therefore appealed to elements of attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by refusing to become deeply involved in geopolitics, but gave little thought to them when he saw military intervention as being necessary.

Biden, similarly, had a more acute awareness of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome with a more Jeffersonian approach like Obama, as demonstrated by his decision-making during the 2021 Afghanistan withdrawal. When making the announcement, he said that "it's time to end the forever wars" (2021), and completed the withdrawal negotiated by Trump (2020). Mead's Jeffersonian tradition can shed light in this decision-making in relation to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. When the withdrawal chaotically unfolded, and ISIS bombed Kaboul airport, killing 13 US military personnel, and 183 others (2021), Biden insisted: "I refused to continue in a war that was no longer in the service of the vital national interest of our people" (2021). The Afghanistan withdrawal showed this as Biden appealed to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, as 63% expressed support for the decision, but with only 47% satisfied with Biden's management of it (CBS, 2021).

Therefore, just as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome existed before Obama's presidency, they have become even more important in US foreign policymaking towards military intervention. It also demonstrates that contrary to claims that Obama did not have a foreign policy doctrine, he did. He began the process of reducing military presence in the MENA region, and approaching foreign policy with more sensitivity to American public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by thinking about how US military power could be used more responsibly to promote its ideals. Consequently, there is far greater introspection about America's global role and an ongoing debate about how military intervention should be considered in the effort to promote perceived American ideals. Obama by no means resolved this debate, but he took it forward post-Iraq regarding how

military intervention should be used, from the more binary debate post-Vietnam. Post-Vietnam policymakers too frequently worked around the concerns expressed that were part of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama began to open the discussion that America its people need to feel confident in itself before promoting its perceived ideals abroad, that at policy-level had not been achieved post-Vietnam.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there was an Obama Doctrine. It outlined that Obama believed that to be able to articulate a set of foreign policy principles, he needed to systematically undo the consequences of Bush's foreign policy approach and then delineate his own. Obama was, therefore, not a pragmatist who expressed little interest in conveying a set of beliefs as an approach to manage the attitudes of the of the Vietnam Syndrome. Instead, he was somewhat himself a product of the attitudes, who represented a predominant section of the centre-left American public that was questioning the role of military intervention and wanted a more diplomatic foreign policy approach. It used a Jeffersonian theoretical analysis of how Obama had a perception of American interests, and its global role, and that he considered external threats to its interests, and domestic factors in how to most effectively pursue them.

Furthermore, it used Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions framework to explain how Obama was Jeffersonian. These characteristics could appear as indecisive, but as the chapter explained, it was more reflective of the internal debate he had with himself about how America can most effectively promote its ideals of democracy and freedom. He was therefore a president who strongly believed in American exceptionalism and that America could be a global force for good that should fight just wars, and he believed the American public was integral to deciding when it should. However, he did not want to provoke domestic strife in pursuing these ideals, which in this case meant, acknowledging the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in his foreign policy approach. This did not mean that Obama was risk-averse, either in his military operations, exemplified by the killing of bin Laden, or his diplomatic efforts shown by the risks in negotiating the JCPOA. Finally, the chapter explained how elements of Obama's approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome endured beyond his presidency, as seen by Trump and Biden's circumspection towards military intervention, and appealing to certain sections of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Chapter five will examine how Obama approached large-scale interventions and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as a Jeffersonian in Libya and the Syrian civil war through using "smart power" that combined using hard power military and economic instruments with soft power by using diplomacy and persuasion (Armitage & Nye, 2007).

Chapter 5: Obama, Military Intervention, and the Vietnam Syndrome

Introduction

Chapter five will discuss Barack Obama's foreign policy approach towards the specific debates of military intervention in Libya and Syria during his presidency. It will explore the extent to which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome factored into his decision-making. The chapter will examine Obama's development of his "smart power" strategy, conceptualised by the scholar Joseph Nye that attempts to combine coercive hard power, such as using sanctions or military intervention, with persuasive soft power. "Hard power is the use of coercion and payment. Soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction" (Nye, 2012:p.160), which influenced Obama's approach towards considering and executing a military intervention. Moreover, as in other parts of the thesis, the chapter is underpinned by the theoretical framework of Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions. The chapter will analyse how Obama's foreign policy approach of Jeffersonian restraint (2010), was reflected by his smart power strategy, partly in response to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. His Jeffersonian approach and smart power strategy influenced his tentative military intervention in Libya as well as his perceived inconsistency towards Syria around whether to intervene or not in light of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Evaluating Obama's approach towards military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome requires some further clarification on what his main objectives were when facing questions about such action in Libya and Syria. As previously discussed in chapter four, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach was more concerned about the costs and risks of military intervention to domestic economic and political stability when advancing the goal of promoting US ideals of democracy and human rights abroad. This differs for example, from Hamiltonians, who can also demonstrate foreign policy restraint, but this is less to do with concerns about US democratic stability. Instead, "the importance of trade would determine the Hamiltonian definitions of America's security interests"(Mead, 1996:p.92) and decision-making regarding military intervention.

Wilsonians' more optimistic view on democracy promotion and collective security (Cox, 2021) has often encouraged a more militaristic US foreign policy approach to pursue these goals. This was demonstrated by John F. Kennedy's foreign policy approach, and the more idealistic neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration such as Paul Wolfowitz and their rationale for the Iraq War. The Jacksonian realist worldview is concerned with maximising US power, and they advocate using unilateral military action to nullify threats if necessary to achieve outright victory over enemies. This tradition was particularly influential amongst neoconservatives and 'Americanists' such as Dick Cheney, who were predominantly driven by attaining primacy through the Iraq War and

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removing Saddam Hussein. The debacle of the Iraq War failed to achieve the Wilsonian ambition of spreading democracy across the Middle East. Furthermore, the broader Jacksonian aim in the War on Terror of almost unequivocal victory categorically failed. The non-state terrorist group, al-Qaeda post-9/11 were not vanquished in Afghanistan or the region, nor were weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) allegedly possessed by Saddam found in Iraq. Instead America entered a military quagmire that provoked distrust amongst Americans and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach was therefore particularly sensitive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and provoking disquiet by using military intervention. This was especially the case when considering intervention in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region since the Iraq War had provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama had been trying to reduce America's military presence there when the conflicts in Libya and Syria arose, and as a Jeffersonian, he wanted to avoid the risk of being drawn into another quagmire motivated by Wilsonian crusading or Jacksonian ferocity. Obama sought to use American power, that was still considerable despite the conflicts Afghanistan and Iraq and a weakened economy at home by showing greater awareness of its limits, particularly in complex regions. He hoped to employ American power more effectively through being less reliant on military intervention. Nevertheless, familiar debates about American exceptionalism and the Unites States being leaders of promoting democracy, liberty and human rights resurfaced during the crises in Libya and Syria, which both occurred in the wake of the Arab Spring. This caused tension amongst the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and Obama's aim to use military intervention more prudently.

This chapter comprises three sections. The first section discusses Obama's development of his smart power strategy that exemplified his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama looked at a wider range of America's hard and soft power instruments at its disposal to use them more efficiently to achieve his desired outcomes pragmatically. In addition, this section analyses how Obama's smart power strategy showed that he neither accepted nor embraced American decline as Robert Singh and others have argued (2012 & Quinn, 2011). His smart power strategy was instead designed to halt the possibility of decline, through crafting a better use of American power that protected and enhanced it by aiming to focus America's foreign policy approach on what can be accomplished (Kitchen, 2010). Obama's instinct to almost exhaust all options before using military intervention reflected his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that preferred using diplomatic avenues during geopolitical challenges. He aimed to build international cooperation, before resorting to military options, or if other hard power methods such as sanctions would not suffice.

Furthermore, Obama's smart power strategy demonstrated a clearer understanding of the domestic public mood and a more effective approach to in his foreign policymaking compared to the broadly Jeffersonian president, Jimmy Carter. This was during a time when both had to manage sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when pursuing their respective geopolitical objectives. Cater was faced with the ongoing Cold War, as well as the oil crisis in light of the 1979 Iranian Revolution that subsequently led to the hostage crisis. Carter's Jeffersonian focus on domestic implications of foreign policy produced a procedural process to policymaking (Knott & Wildavsky, 1977) in the effort to bring greater transparency post-Vietnam, but it lacked vision. Furthermore, Carter simultaneously promoted ambitious Wilsonian ideals, such as human rights and democracy promotion whilst operating with Jeffersonian caution in economically challenging times, therefore causing his foreign policy approach to lack coherence. Additionally, Carter largely lost control of events in the Iran hostage crisis and appeared naïve against Communism after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, having pursued a détente policy.

By contrast, Obama crafted a more consistent Jeffersonian pragmatic foreign policy approach towards military intervention and combatting threats, in his case, Islamic terrorism in particular. However, Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism was not in a form that was not unideological, or that emphasised short-term gain, but rather aimed at promoting American ideals and interests realistically (Milne, 2012). This led to greater success in combatting the threat of al-Qaeda by killing Osama bin Laden, whilst simultaneously emphasising greater diplomacy. The most successful achievement of Obama's smart power strategy reflecting his approach to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was negotiating the Iran nuclear deal. He re-engaged with international institutions to use sanctions in concert against Iran, even threatening military action if necessary to end its nuclear programme. Obama also simultaneously worked to thaw relations with Iran and Muslim countries by pointing to common interests of nuclear non-proliferation and offering a diplomatic resolution with sanctions relief for reducing its stockpiles of enriched uranium levels (Robinson, 2022). There was some discussion about both of these cases in chapter four, but greater analysis is required to explain how Obama's smart power strategy materialised at policy-level. This chapter will discuss how Obama's smart power strategy influenced his foreign policy approach towards military intervention in the MENA and the surrounding region, when the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were especially sensitive.

The second section examines the Libya intervention and how Obama approached the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome when there was little appetite amongst Americans to enter new conflicts. It will study Obama's Jeffersonian approach, as he emphasised to the US public the intervention's costs, and America's role would be limited. Obama originally said that regime-change

was not an objective, in order to allay concerns of entering a similar war to Iraq. That is not to say that Obama did not ultimately use Wilsonian rhetoric to justify the intervention. He expressed concerns about human rights abuses committed by the Libyan dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, and support for the democratic movements in the Arab Spring, setting "the task of protecting the Libyan people, and do whatever it takes to bring down Gaddafi and usher in a new government (2011). However, at a policy-level, Obama conducted the intervention as a Jeffersonian by limiting risks and costs by using airstrikes, to avoid American fatalities and rekindling the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Furthermore, he employed his smart power strategy by encouraging allies and partners to largely take responsibility, particularly in the post-conflict resolution, as part of burden-sharing (Krieg, 2016). This was shown by his working with the United Nations (UN) and the Arab League to bring more legitimacy to the intervention, and giving a more prominent role to European North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies such as France and Britain, whose leaders Nicholas Sarkozy and David Cameron had most strongly called for action. However, Gaddafi was removed from power which created a power vacuum and post-regime violence not wholly dissimilar to what happened in Iraq. Additionally, Obama discovered that NATO were not as dedicated or equipped as he had hoped they would be to stabilise Libya and that allies were still largely reliant on American resources that he was trying to use sparingly. Nevertheless, due to America's limited role of only using airstrikes, the intervention did not drag them into another military quagmire. Obama's Jeffersonian approach to the Libya intervention materialised in a way whereby the military operation itself had some success by keeping to specific objectives, such as protecting civilians. Additionally, Obama factored in the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome relatively effectively through limiting costs through only using airstrikes to avoid deploying ground troops, encouraging greater multilateralism, and giving NATO a more prominent role. However, whilst the operational elements of the Libya intervention may have suited the domestic politics of America by avoiding the backlash of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, it lacked post-conflict planning to bring stability. Obama discovered that US allies did not have the economic capabilities, or political will to reconstruct Libya. Although Obama avoided a protracted occupation by ruling it out before intervening Libya became a failed state that descended into civil war relatively similarly to Iraq.

The third section examines Obama's approach to the Syrian civil war and how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome factored into his decision-making as a Jeffersonian. Early into Obama's presidency, Mead argued that he faced a similar challenge to Jimmy Carter, who entered office when America was recovering from the Vietnam War. Mead warned that Obama's foreign policy approach risked an unravelling through inconsistencies by setting out a modest Jeffersonian foreign policy

approach, but drifting into more Wilsonian objectives of promoting human rights like Carter. Carter's foreign policy approach became muddled between promoting Jeffersonian restraint and Wilsonian advocacy for human rights as a progressive. "The Obama administration cannot easily abandon a human rights agenda abroad. The contradiction between the sober and limited realism of the Jeffersonian worldview and the expansive, transformative Wilsonian agenda is likely to haunt this administration as it haunted Carter's most fatefully when he rejected calls to let the shah of Iran launch a brutal crackdown to remain in power" (2010:p.64).

However, this section will argue that Obama's handling of the Syrian conflict and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome showed that he did broadly adhere to his Jeffersonian principles. It will argue that Obama had greater success in his foreign policy approach than Carter in opening up the debate more about the limits of American power, that nonetheless remained considerable in the international system. Obama had some success in addressing how to use US power and its military most effectively, which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome is part of establishing in this broader debate. This was reflected in Obama's Jeffersonian approach towards Syria by choosing not remove Assad in 2013 without international support from allies, or from the American people and Congress. All parties expressed scepticism towards the claim by US intelligence that held Assad responsible, with memories of previous claims about Saddam and WMDs still vivid, and the fear of entering a similar quagmire through regime-change. The memories of the Iraq War and the distrust in US intelligence also prompted America's ally Britain, not to join the proposed military action. This partially undermined Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach to preserve resources in America's foreign policy approach through greater burden-sharing.

Although Obama's smart power strategy did not strengthen international cooperation, he was able to maintain a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach by pragmatically and tangibly destroying Assad's chemical weapons through negotiation with the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. Obama was sceptical that military action could achieve this, and he acknowledged that with sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically post-Iraq, it was not a viable option. Furthermore, he was also able to keep to his broader Jeffersonian foreign policy approach by later launching airstrikes against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria. This was through outlining clear boundaries of using limited military intervention in the national interest, as the terror group threatened national security. Overall, Obama's management of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had some success in encouraging more introspection about the use of military intervention, that presidents like Carter failed to do. Significantly, he acknowledged the limits of American power, that more parts of the American public were more willing to accept (2013).

Obama, smart power, and the Vietnam Syndrome

This section will examine Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome though formulating his smart power strategy. This was through considering how to use hard and soft power instruments, rather than using military intervention as the first resort. Smart power "is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to expand American influence and establish the legitimacy of American action" (Armitage & Nye, 2007:p.7). Additionally, it was more than an academic term to the Obama administration, and the formulating of the strategy was evident as early as Hillary Clinton's Senate confirmation hearing to become the Secretary of State. Clinton argued that "we must use what has been called 'smart power', the full range of tools at our disposal—diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural—picking the right tool or combination of tools for each situation. With 'smart power', diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy" (2009).

In Joseph Nye and Richard Armitage's definition, "power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get a desired outcome" (2007:p.6). Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach shared a similar interpretation of power, by evaluating the costs and risks, and by predominantly being concerned with the outcomes produced through exercising it. Therefore, Obama's smart power strategy reflected his Jeffersonian approach by considering the different uses of American power through soft power approaches of diplomacy and persuasion, and hard power instruments economic sanctions or if necessary, military intervention. This was especially the case when he considered when and how to use military intervention and approaching the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome because he regarded its use as only being necessary if it stood a strong chance of achieving its intended outcomes.

Obama's smart power strategy of considering a wider range of options when using American power, particularly contrasted with his predecessor and those from different schools of the US Foreign Policy Traditions. Neoconservatives with more Jacksonian and Wilsonian views, such as Robert Kagan, regarded power as mainly involving the use of economic and overwhelming military coercion alone such as the attempt to democratise Iraq which he supported. He claimed that "Americans generally favor policies of coercion rather than persuasion" (2002). Furthermore, he posited that Europe's preference for using soft power means that they "favor peaceful responses to problems, preferring negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion" (Ibid), which displayed weakness. Kagan stated during the transatlantic divisions that emerged when Bush's foreign policy approach became more militaristic reflected that "today's transatlantic problem, in short, is not a

George Bush problem. It is a power problem. American military strength has produced a propensity to use that strength. Europe's military weakness has produced a perfectly understandable aversion to the exercise of military power" (Ibid). Jeffersonian foreign policy approaches and their use of American power have also been criticised by Hamiltonians. The Hamiltonians share some Jeffersonian views on foreign policy restraint, albeit for more fiscal reasons, rather than concern for the strength of democracy at home. "But sooner or later they attack Jeffersonians for failing to develop and project sufficient power" (Mead, 2010:p.62).

Obama's smart power strategy that was part of his Jeffersonian approach towards military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was susceptible to similar criticism. More critical analysis of Obama's smart power strategy of shifting the emphasis of US foreign policy away from military intervention, suggested that it represented decline. Robert Singh contended that "the administration's deployment of 'smart power' was premised on the tough reality of rising powers, American decline, and power diffusion in an international order that was simultaneously changing and challenging Washington on multiple fronts around the globe" (2012:p.40). However, Obama's smart power strategy could be seen as doing the opposite of accepting American decline. Instead it could be regarded as having been an attempt by Obama to reverse potential decline by using a wider and more effective use of foreign policy capabilities to enhance American power in the international system. Nicholas Kitchen echoes this argument, highlighting that "if we understand smart power as reflecting a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of international political power in the modern world, then the Obama administration's approach to leadership doesn't so much reflect the decline of American power per se as it does a recognition of what that power can accomplish, and the dangers to American leadership of its injudicious use" (2010). This further demonstrated Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach by showing greater wariness of the risks of an internationalist foreign policy approach than more Wilsonian interventionists, and especially its domestic political consequences such as provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Moreover, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach and his smart power strategy reflected his sensitivity to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and that he gave more thought to the limits of American power. Hal Brands argued that "the country was facing the legacy of an administration that, from Obama's perspective, had fundamentally mismanaged American power— by overinvesting in the Middle East at the expense of other priorities by launching a costly war in Iraq that had empowered US rivals and undercut the struggle against terrorism, and by employing a unilateralist ethos that had generated more resistance than cooperation" (2018:p.55). Obama was therefore not admitting that America was in decline and being overtaken by emerging powers such

as China, or a resurgent Russia in the international system, and he instead addressed how American power needed to be used better to protect and enhance it.

Nonetheless, acknowledging the limits of American power and encouraging its more effective use, even when it remains considerably greater than global rivals, is challenging for any president. As mentioned in chapter four, the broadly Jeffersonian president, Jimmy Carter, had previously made the case to the American public for the United States to adopt a more prudent foreign policy approach during a period of domestic economic challenges, and relative diminishment of power internationally post-Vietnam, compared with the previous post-World War Two years. Carter called for more introspection about the purpose of America's foreign policy approach when using military intervention, and how America should promote its ideals of democracy and liberty more broadly. In Carter's 'crisis of confidence' address, he said that "I do not refer to the outward strength of America, a nation that is at peace tonight everywhere in the world, with unmatched economic power and military might", but that "we can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation…Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy." (1979). Carter exemplified his awareness of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through his desire to re-evaluate America's foreign policy approach post-Vietnam. However, it also reflected his combination of Jeffersonian views of restraint, and Wilsonian ambitions of democracy promotion.

Presidents may have overlapping ideas from different US foreign policy traditions but holding them does not mean that they will have a failed foreign policy approach. Carter's more Jeffersonian approach that emphasised diplomacy did produce some achievements. He helped negotiate the 1978 Camp David Accords and the subsequent 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, which was no small feat since it involved the centre-right Likud Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin. Furthermore, Carter's displayed some Wilsonian beliefs through his emphasis on human rights, that inspired his decision to terminate military aid to oppressive dictators such as, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, Ernesto Giesel in Brazil, and Jorge Rafael Videla in Argentina (Herring, 2008:p.846). Nevertheless, Carter's foreign policymaking resulted in a more muddled approach with few policy achievements. These amounted to gestures rather than a clear vision that addressed the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome as he aimed to achieve. Consequently, Carter's Jeffersonian approach that attempted to bring greater transparency to address the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and public distrust of government post-Vietnam meant that "the problem was not so much that he did not say specific things about issues but that he placed greater emphasis on methods, procedures and instruments for making policy than on the content of policy itself" (Knott & Wildavsky, 1977:p.50).

Carter's Wilsonian values were simultaneously not clearly communicated as part of a broader vision. "So, while Carter's human rights emphasis was consistent with the public's aversion to military intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, it did not help generate popular approval for his overall handling of foreign policy" (Katz, 2000:p.672). Instead the Wilsonian policymaking around human rights that is usually ambitious appeared inconsistent and incremental under Carter, due to his Jeffersonian restraint, causing the central ideas to his foreign policy approach to undermine one another. Few presidents are always consistent, but Carter did not identify clearly enough whether the core principles in his foreign policy approach adhered to restraint or proactive human rights promotion. Therefore, "Carter emphasized the moral aspects of human rights but not the ways in which U.S. interests could be advanced and U.S. security enhanced through the pursuit of this policy" (Ibid), an important element of Wilsonianism as argued by Tony Smith (2012:p.8) . "Perhaps by presenting human rights as a low-cost means of avoiding military intervention while promoting democratic change favorable to U.S. national interests, Carter could have broadened his base of support" (Katz, 2000:p.672). This demonstrated his inability to implement his Jeffersonian approach either and falling between the two.

Carter's perceived ineffectiveness was exposed by two foreign policy crises that separately undermined his foreign policy approach that mixed Wilsonian and Jeffersonian ideas. Firstly, Carter's reputation for championing Wilsonian human rights was damaged when he gave sanctuary to the ailing Iranian Shah during the 1979 Iranian Revolution whose oppressive regime provoked the uprising. Additionally, the failed military rescue attempt of the American hostages in Iran, Operation Eagle Claw, resulted in a helicopter crash killing eight US servicemen. The Washington Post found that 55% of Americans supported military action to retrieve them beforehand if a deadline to return them was not met (Sussman, 1980), solidifying the perception of Carter's ineptitude. Secondly, Carter's Jeffersonian restraint later appeared weak against Communism when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late 1979 which collapsed Strategic Arms Reduction Talks II in pursuit of a détente policy. He partially misread public concerns about Soviet Communism, having previously claimed that America had an "inordinate fear of Communism" (1977), yet could not change deep-seated public attitudes as 59% of Americans believed that it was "very important" to contain Communism, alongside 27% who said that it was "somewhat important", according to the Chicago Council on Foreign relations (1979). These events together meant that "Carter faced many of the same problems, and the image of weakness and indecision that helped doom his 1980 run for re-election is a perennial problem for Jeffersonian presidents" (Mead, 2010:p.62). Having attempted to address questions about using American power more effectively, particularly military intervention, Carter's inconsistencies was consequently met with Reagan's Jacksonian unapologetic pride in

American power. Reagan's more dichotomous worldview that cast the Soviet Union as the "evil empire" (1983), rather than encouraging introspection into America's foreign policy approach post-Vietnam, contributed to his landslide 1980 election victory.

Obama had a more coherent foreign policy approach to addressing the concerns within the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through his smart power strategy that showed more disciplined Jeffersonian pragmatism. Debate about the limits of American power and how to use it most effectively was similarly a subject in the 2012 presidential election between Obama and Mitt Romney, but there was more bipartisan agreement. "Both believe that the extent of America's decline has been overstated. Both nonetheless recognize that the nation's resources are finite" (Milne, 2012:p.935). Furthermore, unlike Carter, Obama was not leading America against an enemy and rival in the form of the Soviet Union and Communism that many Americans regarded to be a larger geopolitical threat to American power in the international system as the poll earlier indicated. Although the ideology of Islamic extremism inspired al-Qaeda's 9/11 attack which undoubtedly shocked and traumatised Americans that Obama continued fighting, its threat was predominantly regional in the MENA compared to Communism that was led by a then superpower through the Soviet Union, creating a more tangible and existential rival. "The Bush administration's 'war on terror' sought to reinvigorate this existential dynamic, but few remain convinced that the magnitude of the threat posed by radical Islam is comparable to that formerly posed by Marxism/Leninism" (p.951). Consequently, foreign policy was not as high on the agenda for Americans by the 2012 election, as 86% and 84% cited the economy and jobs respectively, as being most important to their vote. In comparison, 59% the same about terrorism, a decrease from 71% in 2010, whilst foreign policy more generally was important to 52% (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Dissecting Obama's 'Jeffersonian pragmatism'

Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that heavily considered domestic factors, such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, has often been described as pragmatic in academic literature. When, assessing Obama's first term, Martin Indyk, Kenneth Lieberthal and Michael O'Hanlon wrote together that, "President Obama has been a pragmatic, and so far, a successful president on hard-power questions of waging war and protecting the country from terrorism" (2012, p:110). Similarly, as briefly mentioned in chapter four, Singh described Obama's foreign policy approach as "unrelentingly pragmatic" (2012:p.6), though in more critical terms, and David Milne classified Obama as being in the category of "results-oriented pragmatists" (2012:p.937). However, Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatic approach to foreign policy and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome needs

further clarification, particularly since pragmatism has different interpretations in International Relations.

Pragmatism can be synonymous with realpolitik, and it especially gained attention in US foreign policy during Henry Kissinger's tenure in the White House from 1969 until 1977. Kissinger served under the administrations of Richard Nixon, and later Gerald Ford as the Secretary of State, and beforehand as the former's National Security Advisor when he formulated his pragmatic realpolitik foreign policy approach. The policy outcomes included the thawing of US relations with the Soviet Union and China, illustrated through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreement in 1972 (Ambrose, 2018). However, Kissinger never formally used the term realpolitik, despite being associated with the strategy. Nonetheless he summarised its central foreign policy approach when describing the role of statesperson as having "the ability to recognize the real relationship of forces and to make this knowledge serve his ends" (1999:p.312). Rham Emanuel, who served as Obama's first Chief of Staff from January 2009 until October 2010, remarked of Obama to the New York Times that "if you had to put him in a category, he's probably more realpolitik, like Bush 41. He knows that personal relationships are important, but you've got to be cold-blooded about the self-interests of your nation" (Baker, 2010). Nicholas Kitchen similarly posited that "the administration's caution is bound up in a sense of the limits of what American power can achieve. Whilst unwilling to describe himself as a realist, Obama is on record as admiring how the arch-realist foreign policy team of the George H.W. Bush" (2019:p.16). Kitchen was referring to Obama's high esteem for George H.W. Bush's National Security Advisor, Brent Snowcroft, of whom he said, "I love that guy" (Goldberg, 2016).

However, whilst Obama expressed admiration for George H.W. Bush, he was neither a Hamiltonian, as Bush was labelled as being by Mead (2010:p.63), nor was he a realist. Obama was also not a realist by traditional International Relations theoretical definitions, since he possessed idealistic views by advocating American exceptionalism, and realists deplore the tendency for the politically defined national identity of the United States and its sense of exceptionalism to make liberalism the ideational default setting in foreign affairs for its leader (Layne, 2006:p.119). Obama expressed his belief that America has a unique global role as a moral leader, as shown in his West Point speech discussed in chapter four (2014). His foreign policy approach did not particularly resemble Kissinger's realpolitik pragmatism, which was more concerned with US interests, as he perceived them, rather than pursuing idealistic objectives, like promoting democracy and human rights. Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism that influenced his smart power strategy therefore needs further analysis. Pragmatism can have negative connotations in politics for being unprincipled or unideological. Milne implicitly addressed Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism and caution, and overtly

discussed the greater complexities of how to make idealistic goals tangibly realistic. He noted that for Obama, "framing policies informed by modesty and provisionally is the best way to avoid dangerous conflict. It is important here to compare this characterization of pragmatism with the more pejorative version of common usage, which emphasizes the realization of short-term gains through excessive compromise" (2012:p.938). Milne noted that Obama's aversion towards conflict and pragmatism should not draw conclusions that he had few deeper beliefs or values.

Milne distanced Obama's foreign policy approach from the negative connotations of pragmatism, by using a definition provided by James Kloppenberg. This definition can be usefully expanded upon to analyse Obama's Jeffersonian smart power strategy as part of his approach towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and military intervention. Kloppenberg wrote that "pragmatism is a philosophy for skeptics, a philosophy for those committed to democratic debate and the critical assessment of the results of political decisions, not for true believers convinced they know the right course of action in advance of inquiry and experimentation. Pragmatism stands for open-mindedness and ongoing debate" (2011:p.xiii). Furthermore, he claimed that Obama was "a man of ideas" (Ibid) in his foreign policy approach, and this could be seen through his ambitions such as the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and promoting democracy and human rights in a more restrained way.

James Lindsay argued that "a more accurate description of how Obama viewed foreign policy was pragmatism rather than realism" (2011:p.773), therefore, separating the two approaches that are frequently paired together. It is particularly helpful to do this when evaluating Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach and his attentiveness to attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Whilst he prioritised protecting American power at policy-level by aiming to avoid costly foreign policymaking, such as military intervention which showed realist characteristics, Obama simultaneously focused on promoting American ideals through nurturing democracy and wellbeing at home whilst more modestly trying to encourage these values abroad. This differed from Jacksonianism that expresses scepticism towards spreading US ideals as a universal appeal and predominantly concentrates on maximising power by nullifying threats. (Mead, 2017). Furthermore, Obama was pragmatic towards securing these American ideals by having greater caution about the practicalities of implementing them, especially when the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive, compared to more optimistic Wilsonians. Obama's attempt to balance idealism and realism in his foreign policy approach featured during his Nobel Peace Prize speech which personified consistent thinking in refusing to be pigeon-holed. He stated that, "within America, there has long been a tension between those who describe themselves as realists or idealists—a tension that suggests a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose

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our values around the world. I reject these choices" (2009). Obama's approach of restraint and pragmatism broadly resonated with the American public, with Pew Research Center finding that only 41% believed that military spending was a top priority in 2013 (Stokes). Its Director, Bruce Stokes, opined that "to separate lofty ambitions from more practical realities, it needs to be interpreted in the context of U.S. public opinion" (Ibid).

The Vietnam Syndrome and smart power at policy-level

At policy-level, Obama's practical approach to military intervention, to maintain security and to promote US ideals was executed through his smart power strategy so as to manage the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This involved using hard power more efficiently through targeted attacks, and emphasising soft power to build cooperations and legitimacy in US actions where possible, particularly when addressing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. That is not to say that this objective of carrying out targeted attacks was overwhelmingly achieved, as it involved increasing the use of drone warfare, as previously mentioned in chapter four, killing hundreds of civilians in collateral damage (2017). Nevertheless, despite problems around morality with Obama's drone warfare, it broadly appealed to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by avoiding high risks, with 58% supportive, according to the Pew Research Center (2015). Analysis of smart power has often focused on its diplomatic outcomes through mainly using hard power through sanctions and the threat of military intervention, alongside persuasion and cooperation.

However, a more blunt use of hard power can be part of a broader smart power strategy, should it pave the way for more soft power approaches and cooperation. This was especially relevant in the 2011 targeted killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan which was hard power action with some Jacksonian characteristics by having little regard for international law but with cost-benefit Jeffersonian calculation (Holland & Jarvis, 2014). Moreover, it was part of a broader smart power strategy to enhance security and soft power at a low-cost, that resembled more Jeffersonian behaviour. Consequently, his Jeffersonian cost reduction produced a narrowing of objectives in the War on Terror "in a manner he considered to offer likelihood of ultimate success. Obama reshaped the geopolitics of the Afghanistan conflict, reconceptualising the war around the AfPak label to include Pakistani territory" (Holland, 2019:p.47). Unlike Bush's approach to fighting al-Qaeda, Obama's neither counted nor relied upon Pakistani assistance: it doubted it (Holland, 2013).

The conduct of Obama's operation when he killed bin Laden could be regarded as a part of his smart power approach because he refused to be sentimental about a long-term ally due to previous Cold War cooperation to achieve his desired result. Nye explained that the hard power act of killing bin Laden was part of a broader smart power approach because "bin Laden had a soft

power of his own which was a myth that he was trying to perpetuate that he was invincible, that he was the strong horse and that his perverted view of religion was the future. And there's no way to attract bin Laden with soft power. And in that sense you had to use hard power to puncture his myth" (2011). Therefore, the use of hard power was necessary to kill and influential leader to weaken the global influence of Islamic extremism and open opportunities to use soft power to dissuade locals from the ideology and therefore strengthen US power and security. Obama demonstrated his belief that weakening al-Qaeda by killing bin Laden could allow the democratic movements of the concurrent Arab Spring could flourish with a lower threat from Islamic extremism. He claimed in a statement addressing the Arab Spring and bin Laden's death that, "he rejected democracy and individual rights for Muslims in favor of violent extremism…By the time we found bin Laden, al-Qaeda's agenda had come to be seen by the vast majority of the region as a dead end, and the people of the Middle East and North Africa had taken their future into their own hands. That story of self-determination began six months ago in Tunisia" (2011). Therefore, Obama's smart power strategy achieved its desired goal of killing an enemy and threat to national security through using a small special military operation that had fairly low risk of provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically. It also partially facilitated promoting US ideals of democracy abroad through the Arab Spring, which will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Obama's Jeffersonian results-oriented smart power strategy to address the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by combining hard and soft power instruments was especially evident when negotiating the Iran nuclear deal. This was no easy feat since many Americans had a negative perception of Iran since the 1979 hostage crisis. The American public specifically highlighted Iran and particularly its nuclear programme as main state that represented the largest threat to national security . According to the Pew Research Center, during the 2012 election Iran was the most mentioned foreign country as an important voting issue at 47%. This was slightly higher than the war in Afghanistan, which 46% of Americans said was important to their vote when its military was continuing to fight al-Qaeda (2012). Furthermore, this was becoming a consistent and growing concern as the Pew Research Center later found that 68% of Americans believed that Iran's nuclear programme was amongst the main emerging security threats, behind al-Qaeda at 75%. Nevertheless, Iran's nuclear programme was ahead of other state powers that Americans regarded as the main emerging threats, with 67% naming North Korea's nuclear programme, China's emergence as a world power at 54% and a growing authoritarian Russia at 32% (2013). Simultaneously, however, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive because the public feared becoming entangled in conflict, which provoked scepticism towards global engagement more broadly. 42% of members of the Council of Foreign Relations said that "the main reason Americans have become less supportive

of America taking an active role in world affairs" was "war fatigue" in Afghanistan and Iraq. This compared to 28% citing the economy and its costs (Ibid).

Therefore, Obama's smart power strategy was at the heart of his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach to Iran's nuclear programme to avoid military conflict. He utilised soft power, through a rhetorical thaw by appealing to common interests by cooperating in non-proliferation by offering engagement, as well as using hard power sanctions to pressure the regime to negotiate. Obama set this tone early into his presidency in his 2009 Prague speech that put the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons at the centre of his foreign policy vision. Moreover, he offered an olive-branch to Iran, stating that "my administration will seek engagement with Iran based on mutual interests and mutual respect. We believe in dialogue" (2009).

Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism included a willingness to speak with traditional adversaries such as Iran, to encourage a negotiated settlement. This rebutted the Bush administration's neoconservative foreign policy approach, largely based on Wilsonian and Jacksonian principles that emphasised using military intervention to eliminate WMDs. "Wilsonians interpret Jeffersonian restraint as moral cowardice…Jacksonians think it is cowardice pure and simple. And why not stand up to Iran"? (Mead, 2010:p.62). Obama was attuned to the failures of this failed militaristic approach in the Iraq War when it transpired that WMDs never existed. Obama criticised what he regarded as Wilsonian ideological dogmatism towards speaking to non-democracies and Jacksonian hostility towards traditional adversaries. In Prague he underscored that making effectively Wilsonian or Jacksonian bold statements against unfavourable regimes that avoids international challenges may be perceived as cowardly, stating that, "to denounce or shrug off a call for cooperation is an easy but also a cowardly thing to do" (2009). Obama's Jeffersonian instincts meant that he believed bravery was demonstrated by finding practical diplomatic resolution to international disputes, that could maintain domestic stability. This mainly stemmed from Obama's own political convictions that favoured restraint over military intervention. Nevertheless, they broadly aligned more with public caution expressed through the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Furthermore, Obama's smart power strategy did produce results without resorting to military intervention. As well as agreeing a New START treaty with Russia in 2010 to both halve the number of nuclear strategic missiles (Baker, 2010), this helped built a stronger international coalition to pressurise Iran to negotiate curbing its nuclear capabilities. "A new arms control treaty with Russia is a good marker of improved relations, as is getting Russia and China, however reluctantly, to agree to back international sanctions against Iran" (Kitchen, 2010). Obama's ambition materialised when Russia and China agreed to vote through tougher hard power sanctions against Iran on the UN

Security Council a month after the New START deal was agreed (MacAskill, 2010). This was in addition to America's own stronger sanctions on oil passed by Congress a year later (MacAskill, 2012). Richard Nephew when speaking for this research claimed that sanctions achieved two things. "First, it shifted the political dynamics on the ground in Tehran, both by demonstrating to the leadership that they needed to change tactics lest they ruin the country and by empowering more pragmatic forces. I believe that the sanctions campaign created a domestic political climate on both the street level and in leadership that was conducive to Rouhani's election and changes to policy. Second, it created urgency in the Iranian system to conclude a deal quickly in 2013" (2022).

Fawaz Gerges argued that "despite his verbal overtures, Obama had decided to maintain economic sanctions against Iran in order to keep up the pressure…As 2011 drew to a close, the United States and Iran found themselves on a path towards war" (2013:p.319). Obama did not explicitly rule out military action, and told the America Israel Public Affairs Committee's 2012 conference that "when it comes to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, I will take no options off the table" (2012). However, Gerges failed to see Obama's broader smart power strategy that of these hard power sanctions and threat of war, whilst simultaneously thawing US relations with Iran and Muslim states, by also using soft power tactics of persuasion, exemplified by his 2009 Cairo speech. Obama stated that "Iran—should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty"(2009).

Moreover, Obama's soft power approach included more Jeffersonian pragmatism on democracy promotion by saying little during the 2009 pro-democracy Green Movement in Iran. "The near-absence of US reaction on that occasion can be explained in part by timing, with the post-election protests coming as the new administration was beginning to pursue its policy of engagement with Iran on the nuclear issue and at the height of its distancing itself from the Bush legacy in the Middle East" (Bouchet, 2013:p.50). Additionally, "Obama places special emphasis on gestures of international goodwill, led by American example, and on the incremental retrenchment of US military commitments overseas" (Dueck, 2015:p.14), notably demonstrated by his withdrawal from Iraq in 2011. Through Obama's smart power strategy, he signalled to Iran that America would firmly discourage its nuclear programme with stronger sanctions in concert with the international community which strengthened their legitimacy, whilst appealing to common interests. "If a people or nation believes American objectives to be legitimate, we are more likely to persuade them to follow our lead…Appealing to others' values, interests, and preferences can, in certain circumstances, replace the dependence on carrots and sticks" (Armitage & Nye, 2007:p.6).

When Obama announced the agreement on July 14, 2015, he exemplified his desire to avoid military intervention. "Without a diplomatic resolution, either I or a future U.S. president would face a decision about whether or not to allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon or whether to use our military to stop it. Put simply, no deal means a greater chance of more war in the Middle East" (2015). This again reflected Obama's Jeffersonian instincts, particularly his concern for the domestic implications of war, such as provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and strong public opposition, when Obama had made reducing US involvement in the MENA central to his foreign policy approach. Americans were fairly unsupportive of the deal. The Pew Research Center found in September 2015 that 49% disapproved of the deal, compared to 21% that approved and 30% did not know (2015). Nevertheless, Obama avoided resorting to military intervention which Obama viewed as a success, even if it did not generate large support. Obama's smart power strategy was important to limiting America's military role in the MENA through small and targeted military operations, notably the killing of bin Laden, as well as building a more diplomatic foreign policy approach to the region. Nevertheless, Obama could not avoid new military intervention campaigns in the MENA. The next section will analyse the 2011 Libya intervention, and Obama's attempt to balance America's role as a global leader, whilst considering the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome at home by having a limited role.

Libya: Balancing interests, idealism, and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome

This section will analyse Obama's sole direct military intervention in Libya in 2011, as well as the role of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and how Obama managed them. It will explore Obama's Jeffersonian attempt to synthesise idealism and interests by modestly promoting democracy and human rights in the hope of empowering Libyans to decide their political future, alongside limiting objectives as being in the national interest. Obama assessed that human rights should and could be protected through US airstrikes as part of a multilateral NATO campaign to protect civilians with cooperation with Arab League. This exemplified Obama's use of his smart power strategy in a larger-scale military intervention by being able to obtain some soft power legitimacy for the action by building cooperation with the UN and the Arab League to develop a stronger narrative and case for the intervention (Nye, 2011). This contrasted with Bush's unilateral military intervention in Iraq which depleted American soft power and its ability to strengthen international cooperation to enhance US power and achieve its desired outcome (Ibid).

The Libya intervention was authorised under international law by invoking the UN Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. R2P was established in 2005, in the aim to prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. R2P responded to the inconsistent responses by the

international community to atrocities. Little action was taken during the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, whilst in 1999, NATO launched a humanitarian intervention in Kosovo and the broader Yugoslav Wars to prevent genocide, but without a UN legal mandate. President Bill Clinton said shortly after the campaign that "NATO stopped deliberate, systematic efforts at ethnic cleansing and genocide" (1999). R2P tries to establish a more consistent legal doctrine to justify humanitarian intervention. This is through interpreting sovereignty as being conditional on states protecting all populations of mass atrocities and human rights violations (2021). The use of international institutions and collective security shows some Wilsonian factors in the military intervention (Cox, 2021), rather than Jeffersonian influences. However, Obama wanted to create the political space to allow Libyans to decide their own political future as a more Jeffersonian exemplar with restraint towards democracy promotion through military intervention during the wider Arab Spring. This contrasted from Wilsonian democracy promotion that often has greater appetite for more proactive involvement in efforts to build democracy through using ground troops.

Moreover, by not using ground troops, Obama could avoid a quagmire and occupation with increased burden-sharing (Krieg, 2016) with NATO and European allies, particularly France and Britain who agreed to manage the post-conflict situation. Obama's conduct of the operation therefore, aimed to prevent expending American power in the MENA when he was trying to militarily withdraw from the region that he regarded as being outside direct US interests (Clarke & Rickets, 2017). Additionally, Obama's restrained approach accommodated US public scepticism towards military intervention. Three months after the intervention began, Pew Research Center found that 65% (2011) of Americans wanted to reduce military commitments overseas. Furthermore, it found that Americans had little enthusiasm for the Arab Spring, with only 24% believing that it was good for America, compared to 35% that said it would be bad, and 28% saying it would not have much effect (2011).

Obama consequently demonstrated strong awareness of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by having limited involvement in the intervention, making the initial intervention a successful Jeffersonian conflict (Holland, 2019:p.49). Nevertheless, the post-Gaddafi fallout showed that Obama Jeffersonian ambitions of persuading allies to shoulder greater responsibility from America in military operations were difficult to achieve (Goldberg, 2016). Additionally, Obama's Jeffersonian approach that attempted to allow Libyans to build their own political future, failed to account for the lack of political structures or knowledge to democratise as a society that had experienced decades of highly centralised dictatorship under Gaddafi. Instead of democratising, Libya became a failed state, rife with violence (Kuperman, 2015). Obama had some success in estimating how effectively America could promote its ideals when the attitudes of the Vietnam

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Syndrome were sensitive, but he was unsuccessful in encouraging allies to do more. Additionally, he discovered that even military intervention with limited scope can nonetheless descend in chaos, as this section will further examine.

Obama's Jeffersonian approach towards Libya

The 2011 Libya intervention was the closest Obama came drifting towards the Wilsonian idealism that Mead had warned could derail Obama's foreign policy approach, similarly to Carter's. "Their basic Jeffersonian approach was balanced in part by a strong attraction to idealistic Wilsonian values and their position at the head of a Democratic Party with a distinct Wilsonian streak (2010:p.63). However, in the wake of the broader Arab Spring, Obama was initially lukewarm about the protests across the MENA region that demanded an end to dictatorship to pave way for democracy.

Some of the most enthusiastic Wilsonian overtures towards the Arab Spring came from neoconservatives, rather than Obama himself. The Iraq War did nothing to inspire the Arab Spring or a potential democratic ripple effect, and it contributed to more regional instability. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring did not stop neoconservatives from arguing that their worldview had been vindicated. Significant sections of Arab societies were showing that they shared democratic values by ousting dictators in Tunisia, Egypt (as discussed in chapter four), and then attempted to in Libya. Bush praised the protests, saying that "in the Arab Spring, we have seen the broadest challenge to authoritarian rule since the collapse of Soviet Communism...As Americans, our goal should be to help reformers to turn the end of tyranny into durable, accountable civil structures. Emerging democracies need strong constitutions" (2013) Joshua Muravchik also optimistically, stated that, "there is danger that the Arab Spring could yield a deadly harvest. Yet there are substantial reasons to hope that it will instead produce something flourishing and beneficial"(2011:p.33). Elliot Abrams wrote that "it's neither perfect nor pretty, but the Arab Spring proves that neoconservatives were right all along" (2012).

When interviewed for this research, Dan Meridor mentioned Abrams's article, saying that, "I remember at the beginning of the Arab Spring, he wrote that this is the vindication of Bush" (2021). Nevertheless, Meridor recalled being more sceptical about the Arab Spring, arguing that the West naively believed that "in no time there was going to be born a new Thomas Jefferson and a new republic, which was a big mistake...you're not going to end up with democracy, you are going to get Muslim fanaticism, or a civil war like in Libya for years to come" (2021). A tension exists between neoconservatives and many Israelis because the former wanted to proactively democratise the Middle East, partly to support Israel, whilst the latter are pessimistic about Arab countries becoming democratic. Muravchik acknowledged this, noting that "while neocons saw democratization as a

balm to soothe the fevered brow of the Arab world, Israeli strategists (with the notable exception of Natan Sharansky) thought this utterly naïve" (2011:p28).

Obama's Jeffersonian disposition shared some of the doubtful views of the Israelis about the efficacy of democracy promotion through military intervention when domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were sensitive. However, Obama departed from the Israeli attitudes that Arab states cannot democratise, since he stated as a Jeffersonian exemplar in his 2009 Cairo speech that its populations could choose their "own path" (2010 & Bouchet, 2013) to democratisation. Therefore, although Obama militarily intervened in Libya, he was not especially seduced or pressured by the Wilsonian streak that Mead warned of. This was "highly representative of Obama's reluctance to engage in military conflict, getting out ahead of the Wilsonian waves of history" (Holland, 2019:p.48).

Instead, Obama's Jeffersonian approach assessed the Arab Spring movement as evaluating the likelihood of democracy flourishing country-by country, rather than romantically looking at democracy promotion as an unstoppable phenomenon. "The president approaches foreign policy on a case-by-case basis and purposefully, deliberatively—rather too slowly at times—examines the merits or demerits of any given case" (Milne, 2012:p.938). This was evidenced when it was revealed that "Obama instructed his staff to come up with 'tailored', 'country-by-country' strategies on political reform. He told his advisors to challenge the traditional idea that stability in the Middle East always served US interests. Obama wanted to weigh the risks of both 'continued support for increasingly unpopular and repressive regimes' and a 'strong push by the United States for reform'" (Lizza, 2011).

When the violence in Libya began, the Obama administration was divided between officials encouraging restraint, and calls to intervene on humanitarian grounds. Obama's Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates voiced frustration towards calls for militarily intervention in Libya. He recounted that "I reminded my colleagues that when you start a war, you never know how it will go. The advocates of military intervention expected a short, easy fight. How many times had that naïve assumption proven wrong? I would ask, 'can I just finish the two wars we're in before you go looking for new ones'" (2014:p.511-12)? Fitzgerald and Ryan highlighted that "here the lessons of the Iraq War weighed on the mind of Gates" (2014:p.98) and therefore the administration. An anonymous senior official admitted that "the big lesson from Iraq, to state the obvious, wasn't so much whether we could defeat Saddam…It was the day after, the year after, the decade after. It was about winning the peace" (Hastings, 2011). Simultaneously, there were officials that were "Wilsonian-inclined idealists such as Susan E. Rice, Samantha Power, and Anne-Marie Slaughter" (Milne, 2012:p.936).

Rice, then Obama's UN Ambassador wrote on reflection that, "Libya was an urgent case, I believe, where the risks and costs of intervention to the US were tolerable when weighed against the humanitarian benefit" (2019:p.294). Power, who was Obama's Special Assistant in the National Security Council and Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights during the Libya crisis, considered similar questions to Gates, but supported intervening. She wrote, "since Qaddafi had demolished Libya's institutions, how would the country function without a strongman at the top? Despite these considerations, neither at the time nor presently do I see how we could have rejected the appeals of our closest European allies, the Arab League, and a large number of Libyans" (2020:p.307).

Obama's results-oriented Jeffersonian pragmatism towards the Arab Spring, that considered the efficacy of military intervention to promote American ideals, and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome raised questions about his foreign policy beliefs. "Obama's aides often insist that he is an anti-ideological politician interested in what actually works. He is, as one says, a 'consequentialist'" (Lizza, 2011). There has been similar interpretations of Jeffersonian foreign policy whereby, "the objectives of foreign policy were but a means to the end of protecting and promoting the goals of domestic society, that is, the individual's freedom and society's well-being" (Tucker & Hendrickson, 1990:p.139). Those who have argued that Obama's foreign policy approach was consequentialist often cited his own quote "don't do stupid shit" (Goldberg, 2016), However, whilst Obama did focus on outcomes of decisions around military intervention, he did not dismiss the methods of how to achieve desired goals, especially in fulfilling American ideals of democracy promotion, quite the opposite. Indeed, he actually thought quite deeply about the methods of approaching military intervention and how it could be used most effectively to promote American ideals rather than being unideological. Obama's Jeffersonian principles did promote democracy and human rights, albeit more cautiously than Wilsonians, as seen by his response a day after Gaddafi encouraged his supporters to attack demonstrators, calling them "rats" and "cockroaches" (2011). Obama said that "the suffering and bloodshed is outrageous, and it is unacceptable. So are threats and orders to shoot peaceful protesters and further punish the people of Libya. These actions violate international norms and every standard of common decency. This violence must stop. The United States also strongly supports the universal rights of the Libyan people" (2011).

Nevertheless, Obama was wary of idealistic rhetoric if there were few solutions offered to make ideals become reality. Therefore, he was not a consequentialist in the sense that he only considered the outcomes of decisions, and he perhaps even overthought processes of how to attain idealistic objectives. The Libya intervention demonstrated Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism in action by pondering the right and wrong methods of promoting American ideals and how to ensure that

they are ultimately realised in a way that would not be too costly, dangerous to American lives, or cause domestic discord by provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, he saw little strategic benefit to intervening in Libya which he regarded "as primarily a European problem, with European NATO members presumed capable enough to take the military lead" (Michaels, 2012:p.57). Libya is geographically near Europe and its leaders feared that violence would cause an influx of refugees and Obama took the view that. Therefore, "it was not a surprise that President Obama should expect Europe to take a leading role in dealing with a crisis such as Libya's since he had argued during the 2008 campaign that Europe should assume greater responsibility for its own backyard" (Singh, 2012:p.127). Indeed, rather than Obama's own sense of urgency, Sarkozy particularly pressured him to act, recalling that "I felt that I'd been behind the curve with Tunisia. On the periphery with Egypt, so when Libya came along, we couldn't delay. Gaddafi had gone mad. That's why I moved quickly from calling for a political solution, to calling for a no-fly-zone" (2016)

Consequently, Obama set out to Americans and the world that the proposed military intervention in Libya would attempt to balance realist and idealist tensions when America committed to global leadership. He outlined specific objectives that he believed were in the national interest, whilst simultaneously appealing to American ideals of promoting democracy and human rights influenced by American exceptionalism. Obama stated that, "for generations, the United States of America has played a unique role as an anchor of global security and as an advocate for human freedom. Mindful of the risks and costs of military action, we are naturally reluctant to use force to solve the world's many challenges. But when our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act" (2011). Moreover, he used just war rhetoric by supporting military action when there is an imminent humanitarian crisis, stating that "if we waited one more day, Benghazi, a city nearly the size of Charlotte, could suffer a massacre" (Ibid). Therefore, "Obama's Address offers a justification of American involvement in the intervention that seems to be clearly based on jus ad bellum principles"(van der Linden, 2012:p.2)-meaning just conditions of war.

Obama successfully invoked R2P having passed UN Resolution 1973, which further demonstrated his Jeffersonian just war principles as the doctrine advocates for military action as a last resort. The UN resolution agreed "to protect civilians, civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory" (2011:p.3). This pre-empted potential concerns amongst the American public that represented the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome of a potential quagmire and high fatalities of US soldiers. At the time, only 27% believed that America had a responsibility to act in Libya, compared to 63% that did not, and 10% did not know according to the Pew Research Center (2011). In some respects, the approach to the Libya intervention had similarities to the Powell

Doctrine and the 1991 Gulf War by prioritising the national interest and with its limited scope. Unlike the Powell Doctrine however, the Libya intervention had more emphasis on humanitarianism through only using airstrikes without American ground troops, and relying on NATO much more.

Obama's approach reflected the influential legacy of the Iraq War and his fear of entering a similar conflict. This was on explicitly on display when he explained that he was, initially at least, ruling out regime-change, by specifically citing the importance of avoiding a conflict similar to the Iraq War. He argued that "if we tried to overthrow Gaddafi by force, our coalition would splinter. We would likely have to put US troops on the ground to accomplish that mission, or risk killing many civilians from the air. The dangers faced by our men and women in uniform would be far greater…To be blunt, we went down that road in Iraq" (2011). Obama's multilateral approach to burden-share allowed him to strike some balance between addressing interests and ideals in the Libya intervention. He limited objectives to protecting human lives and keeping out of political matters to give "the ability of the Libyan people to determine their own destiny" (2011), as an exemplar Jeffersonian towards democracy promotion. Additionally, it tied into Obama's smart power strategy by building greater international cooperation to give the intervention more legitimacy. Nye noted that, "if you look at the case of Libya for example, he was very careful not to use American military power until he had the power of a narrative which was based on a resolution from the Arab League and the U.N. If he had gone in unilaterally with American military power the narrative or soft power story would have been that Americans invade another Muslim country" (2011).

The administration's terminology around the Libya intervention further demonstrated its Jeffersonian nature by trying to avoid executive power overreach. Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor, Ben Rhodes, recalled that when speaking about the Libya intervention to the American public, "I had been told by our lawyers that I was not supposed to use the word 'war'—we hadn't sought congressional authorization, and were arguing that it was a limited military operation, and therefore within the president's constitutional authority" (2019:p.118). Obama believed that he obtained the legal justification for intervention through the UN, which the Iraq War did not have. This did not stop the House of Representatives from censuring the president for not obtaining Congressional authorisation, in which around 70 Democrats voted with Republicans, who had previously lost a vote to cut funding (2011). Nonetheless, Libya was a model intervention for a modern Jeffersonian (Holland, 2019:p.48) seeking to pay a limited cost and bear a limited burden (Quinn, 2011:p.819). This reflected how Obama's Jeffersonian thinking considered what he believed was achievable in the intervention.

The Libya intervention, predominantly led by Britain and France, with the US in the NATO operation was originally lauded as an implicit blueprint for conducting military operations to alleviate the concerns of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama's Permanent Representative to NATO, Ivo Daalder, co-authored an article with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander of the US European Command, James Stavridis, a year after the intervention began. They called the Libya operation "the right way to run an intervention" (2011). They argued that "by any measure, NATO succeeded in Libya. It saved tens of thousands of lives from almost certain destruction. It conducted an air campaign of unparalleled precision, which, although not perfect, greatly minimized collateral damage. It enabled the Libyan opposition to overthrow one of the world's longest-ruling dictators" (p.3). Obama's restrained Jeffersonian approach to the intervention also complimented just war principles by protecting lives that attempted to act proportionately and precisely to avoid collateral damage.

Daalder and Stavridis's assessment also reflected the criteria for a successful Jeffersonian military intervention through prudent democracy promotion that appreciated domestic concerns such as the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. "Libya was an ideal type of modern Jeffersonian conflict—one pursued reluctantly because America could not avoid involvement. The pressures to intervene came only partly from Obama; more significantly they resulted from America's exceptional identity, public and international outrage, and partisan domestic pressures" (Holland, 2019:p.49). Furthermore, the intervention followed a Jeffersonian approach that was alert to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and its concerns about the costs and risks to American lives. "It accomplished all of this without a single allied casualty and at a cost—$1.1 billion for the United States—that was a fraction of that spent on previous interventions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq" (Daalder & Stavridis, 2011:p.3). This was done "in an effort to avoid putting boots on the ground, the Obama administration has relied heavily on manned and unmanned airpower" (Krieg, 2016:p.107). The Libya intervention was driven largely by upholding ideals of human rights through a cost-effective approach with low risk. "The conflict was fought in a modern Jeffersonian style, utilising all available technological sophistication, coupled with elegant and lofty rhetoric, in order to minimise the costs and risks to the United States" (Holland, 2019:p.49).

Moreover, NATO coordinated actions with eighteen countries, with fourteen member states, three Arab League members, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, and finally, Sweden. "France and the United Kingdom flew over 40 percent of the sorties, together destroying more than a third of the overall targets. Italy provided aircraft for reconnaissance missions and, along with

Greece, access to a large number of air bases. Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the United Arab Emirates deployed fighters for combat operations, and Jordan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and Qatar helped enforce the no-fly zone" (Daalder, & Stavridis, 2011:p.4). The Obama administration's more multilateral and cooperative style to military intervention was labelled by an official as "leading from behind" (Lizza, 2011) to operate more as equal partners. "For the administration, this was an attempt to demonstrate a less domineering, more pragmatic and cautious approach to a world in which Washington recognized both its limited capacity to shape events and the critical way its foreign policy was often perceived abroad" (Dunn, 2017:p.193). The Obama administration's ability to utilise soft power by persuading Western and regional allies, strengthened the legitimacy of the hard power military action. Hillary Clinton claimed that the intervention itself exemplified "smart power at its best, we will provide essential, unique capabilities that we have, but the Europeans and the Arabs had to be the first over the line. We did not put one single American soldier on the ground" (2015), reflecting how the strategy also tied into managing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Andreas Krieg argued that this burden-sharing in military intervention was a form of 'surrogate warfare', but it did not come without difficulties. "In Libya too, the initial lack of synergy between coalition air operations and surrogate ground operations posed a major obstacle to a swift victory" (2016:p.110), with the campaign lasting 222 days. Nevertheless, Obama's ability to provide the majority of support to hold together a multinational military intervention, further exemplified his Jeffersonian execution of the conflict. Furthermore, as a Jeffersonian, Obama, would have likely forgiven the lack of synergy that prevented a swift victory as long as it did not derail his overarching objective. That objective was to reduce US overseas commitments, particularly in the MENA region where military entanglement in Iraq had originally inflamed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. "A Jeffersonian policy of restraint and withdrawal requires cooperation from many other countries" (Mead, 2010:p.63), which Obama garnered. He rhetorically conveyed this approach by implicitly inverting John F. Kennedy's call for the United States to "bear any burden" (1961), to share them. Obama stated that, "real leadership creates the conditions and coalitions for others to step up as well; to work with allies and partners so that they bear their share of the burden and pay their share of the costs; and to see that the principles of justice and human dignity are upheld by all" (2011).

The military cooperation that Obama built to continue a broader foreign policy approach of restraint and withdrawal reflected his core Jeffersonian principles. Furthermore, Obama's desire to avoid overinvesting in military intervention beyond national security interests demonstrated his understanding of the sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, that he naturally sympathised with. Three months into what was ultimately an eight month NATO campaign, public opinion

changed, from 47% approving of military action and 37% disapproving, to 39% approving and 46% disapproving by June (Gallup, 2011). Notably, the reason most provided for disapproval was not because of the substance or execution of the operation. "Most who disapprove, 64%, do so because they do not think the US should be in Libya at all" (Ibid). Obama was not so much following the public mood, but shared similar concerns that are usually expressed in the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, particularly as he regarded the Libya conflict as more of European problem.

Obama's limited goals through avoiding the use of ground troops in Libya, therefore indicated that he particularly planned the operation to reflect his awareness of the domestic politics and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome more than the geopolitics of the conflict. This objective of Obama's had some domestic success because the Libya intervention generated neither strong support, nor strong opposition, including when the airstrikes lasted longer than expected. Support remained lukewarm by September, as 44% of Americans believed that it was right to conduct airstrikes, compared to 33% who said it was wrong, and 23% who had no opinion, according to the Pew Research Center (2011). More tellingly about the effect of Obama's Jeffersonian low-cost approach by 'leading from behind' to appreciate the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, the intervention received little national attention. This was evidenced by only 17% of Americans saying that they followed news about Libya closely by September (Ibid).

Additionally, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint and stronger cooperation to maintain domestic stability included delegating the post-conflict reconstruction of Libya to NATO allies, Britain, and France after military operations ended. Cameron and Sarkozy triumphantly visited Libya together towards the end of the operation, and were greeted by Libyans celebrating. Moreover, Cameron expressed far more Wilsonian optimism for the region to embrace democratic values, rather than Obama's Jeffersonian caution that treated Libya as an individual case. Cameron claimed that "this does go beyond Libya. This is a moment when the Arab spring could become an Arab summer, and we see democracy advance in other countries too" (2011).

However, both leaders proved to be unreliable allies in their commitment they gave to stabilising the country. The Libya intervention may have achieved specific US objectives that Obama aimed for through his Jeffersonian approach, such as avoiding US fatalities and high costs by building a multinational coalition, which managed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome well. "Further, by leaving much of the heavy lifting to allies, the United States could avoid the spectre of another Iraq, a quagmire that could take a decade to exit" (Fitzgerald & Ryan, 2014:p.104). Nevertheless, the lack of post-war planning amongst allies that Obama entrusted, led to a relatively similar outcome to Iraq. "After rebel forces captured and killed Gaddafi, the country descended into a state of disorder and

violence that persists to this day, allowing ISIL to build a presence and generating large numbers of displaced persons who fled across the region or else were prepared to take the perilous journey across the Mediterranean to Europe" (MacMillan, 2019:p.590). The increased terrorism also killed Americans in 2012 when a mortar attack killed the US Ambassador to Libya, John Christopher Stevens and two CIA contractors on September 11, 2012 (CNN).

Obama expressed regret about the Libya intervention, even on a limited basis, and acknowledged that the "worst mistake" (2016), was "probably failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya" (Ibid). Leon Panetta, who succeeded Gates as the Secretary of Defense during the Libya intervention in July 2011 implicitly explained that Obama's Jeffersonian approach of being less controlling to allow Libyans to shape their own political future was more challenging than expected. In an interview for this research, Panetta said that "I think that the hope was that the individuals within the country would be able to put together a mechanism for governing that would, you know, allow a country to fully participate in the governing of their nation. But these are tribal societies, and it takes a while to be able to achieve that capability" (2021). Similarly, Daalder retrospectively conceded this, and that the intervention failed, having praised it at the time. He admitted "the Libyan people weren't prepared for that. They had been suffering for 41 years or more, under a dictatorship, and they weren't prepared yet to figure out how to manage their own affairs" (2017). The local population in Libya made similar mistakes during the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saddam in Iraq, albeit, as their own decision, rather than under US military occupation. Notably, "Libya passed the Political Isolation Law, in May 2013, effectively banning anyone involved in Qaddafi's regime from the new government" (Mzioudet & David, 2014). This had similar effects to the de-Baathification policy in Iraq by excluding anybody who knew anything about governing, thus creating a political and security vacuum. Therefore, the warnings that Gates had made about the difficulties of bringing political stability post-conflict largely materialised.

Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint through burden-sharing to avoid costly intervention that could provoke the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome achieved some of those goals. He highlighted that "we actually executed this plan as well as I could have expected: We got a UN mandate, we built a coalition, it cost us $1 billion—which, when it comes to military operations, is very cheap" (Goldberg, 2016). Nevertheless, NATO allies did not fulfil the role he hoped it would adopt in the post-conflict reconstruction, leading him to infamously describe them as "free riders" (Ibid), when reflecting on the intervention. Obama laid out his frustration to implement his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of building greater international cooperation to be able to act with more modesty. He stated that, "the irony is that it was precisely in order to prevent the Europeans and the Arab states from holding our coats while we did all the fighting that we, by

design, insisted. It was part of the anti–free rider campaign…But what has been a habit over the last several decades in these circumstances is people pushing us to act but then showing an unwillingness to put any skin in the game" (Ibid).

Moreover, he explicitly criticised Cameron for getting "distracted" by domestic affairs, and claimed that "Sarkozy wanted to trumpet the flights he was taking in the air campaign, despite the fact that we had wiped out all the air defenses and essentially set up the entire infrastructure" (Ibid). Obama was not too bothered by this, and as a Jeffersonian he welcomed what he described as the "purchase France's involvement in a way that made it less expensive for us and less risky for us"(Ibid). Obama's comments angered allies, shown by the former British Foreign Office minister Alaistair Burt, who said "when I've been in the MENA region it's not the UKs retreat that's commented upon, Mr President" (2016). However, Obama was largely vindicated by the British Parliamentary report that was similar to the Chilcot Inquiry to Britain and its then prime minister, Tony Blair's role in the Iraq War. The British Parliamentary report concluded that "through his decision-making in the national security council, former prime minister David Cameron was ultimately responsible for the failure to develop a coherent Libya strategy…this meant that a limited intervention to protect civilians drifted into an opportunist policy of regime change by military means" (2016).

Nevertheless, Obama did not escape retrospective criticism after his Jeffersonian approach in Libya that attempted to synthesise idealism and realism by protecting human rights with a limited involvement failed. Anne-Marie Slaughter, who was Obama's Director of Policy Planning in the State Department during the Libya intervention, which she supported, criticised what she regarded as a muddled approach. She argued that "on issues like whether to intervene in Libya there's really not a compromise and consensus. You can't be a little bit realist and a little bit democratic when deciding whether to stop a massacre" (2011). Critics who opposed the intervention argued that the US and its allies "could have spared Libya from the resulting chaos and given it a chance of progress under Qaddafi's chosen successor: his relatively liberal, Western-educated son Saif al-Islam" (Kuperman, 2015;p.67). However, this was optimistic since al-Islam was in the inner circle of his father's regime, and claims that he is liberal are generous, as he remains wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes during the Libyan uprising (2011). Furthermore, he befriended the far-right Austrian politician Jorg Haider during his university education in Vienna, which hardly indicated much sympathy for liberal values.

Whether there is a balance between these two foreign policy approaches is debatable, but Obama certainly did not find it in the Libya intervention as he hoped to. Obama approached it with a

Jeffersonian pragmatism, whereby he calculated what America could achieve in its idealistic foreign policy goals by protecting human rights, and simultaneously behaved cautiously towards straying too far from the national interest by state-building. Consequently, he avoided aggravating the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, but the inability of US allies to burden-share meant that Libya became a failed state like Iraq. This shaped Obama's approach towards Syria, which the final section will examine his approach towards whilst balancing the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and public fatigue from an adventurist foreign policy approach.

Reassessing Obama's Syria 'red line' and the Vietnam Syndrome

The final section will examine Obama's foreign policy approach towards Syria and reassess the criticism of his handling of it. Specifically, it will argue that whilst Obama appeared indecisive about whether to intervene, his own position remained broadly consistent by attempting to adhere to his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that was sensitive towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The crisis perhaps most starkly demonstrated the significance of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the complexities it brought to his presidency. Obama's demonstrated his calculated Jeffersonian approach to the Syria crisis with his now infamous warning in 2012 that "we have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus" (2012). Obama's red line and its subsequent violation would epitomise his grappling with the tensions of debates about American exceptionalism between crusaders and exemplars. He conveyed the message that he would respond to human rights abuses as a moral global leader and crusader when his preconditions were met by Assad using of chemical weapons. Simultaneously however, Obama remained wary of the sensitive domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome post-Iraq War that urged promoting ideals as an exemplar. Moreover, his broader Jeffersonian foreign policy approach instinctively sympathised with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama wanted to militarily intervene in Syria with an international coalition to preserve resources in a crisis that did not affect direct interests, similarly to Libya. However, when he could not build a united and strong international alliance, he was constrained in circumstances that he said he would use military intervention. He consequently was unable to execute the Jeffersonian response he wanted that considered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome.

Debate about how America would respond when Assad did use chemical weapons in 2013 provoked questions about American's credibility and its global role to uphold ideals of human rights and democracy for Syrians striving for these ambitions. Nevertheless, Obama's Jeffersonian instincts sought to avoid entanglements abroad to address the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in an

attempt to strengthen domestic political trust in democratic values. During the early stages of the

Arab Spring in 2011, "the Obama administration's policy on Syria was built on the imperative not to

get involved in another intervention and wishful thinking on the transition of the Assad regime"

(Ryan & Fitzgerald, 2014:p.119). In particular, "Obama was determined to avoid repetition of Iraq,

and one of the lessons drawn from the removal of Saddam Hussein was that Washington failed to

understand and manage the warring factions after his removal" (p.120). An anonymous

administration official confirmed this concern, stating that, "nobody wants another Iraq" (2011). The

American public similarly voiced clear opposition to any military involvement in Syria in 2012. The

Pew Research Center found that 64% of Americans opposed any form of military intervention in Syria

as the civil war began to escalate (2012). Their circumspect views towards military intervention that

reflected the sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was not only confined to opposition of the

use of ground troops in Syria. A majority of Americans opposed any involvement, as 62% were

against bombing Syrian forces to protect anti-government groups, and providing them with arms

(Ibid).

Obama's self-inflicted dilemma between committing to his red line and the attitudes of the Vietnam

Syndrome

As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, Walter Russell Mead warned that the Obama

administration could be susceptible to being caught between having a restrained Jeffersonian foreign

policy approach that appreciated the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and a transformative

Wilsonian agenda (2010:p.64). The Syria conflict demonstrated this tension quite clearly, but Mead

did not anticipate Obama's determination to prevent his Jeffersonian strategy to reduce America's

military presence in the Middle East from being derailed. Instead, Obama did not want to allow

Wilsonian moral arguments to draw America into what he feared would be another protracted

intervention that was outside direct national security interests. For Obama therefore, "any US option

not only had to serve US interests, but also had to be effective" (Fitzgerald & Ryan, 2014:p.114),

showing that he remained a more disciplined Jeffersonian compared to Carter.

Obama demonstrated his Jeffersonian pragmatism again by wanting to support and uphold

American ideals in a tangible way, rather than posturing with a military strike that he believed would

achieve little in changing the situation on the ground. Furthermore, whilst Obama stated as early as

August 2011, that "for the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step

aside" (2011), this did not differ from large parts of his approach to the Arab Spring. He had

previously pressured dictators to leave, such as Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in 2011, and Gaddafi later

that year with limited military intervention. Nevertheless, Obama remained fairly consistent in

wanting to allow respective local populations to decide their own political future afterwards, rather than America becoming deeply involved in their affairs militarily and politically. Furthermore, Obama had only completed the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq at the end of 2011, and he pointedly told the troops on their return at the Fort Bragg military base in North Carolina that "it's harder to end a war than begin one" (2011). Such thinking influenced Obama's caution towards the Syrian conflicted since he wanted to continue this Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of withdrawing troops from the MENA region.

Obama's position on Syria throughout 2011 and much of 2012 was therefore closer to the exemplar approach of restraint, that he demonstrated in his handling of the Egyptian revolution. Obama believed that Assad's position, like Mubarak's before him, would become untenable, and a transition would begin (Cooper, 2011). However, Obama underestimated Assad's tenacity to remain in power. By 2012 Obama appeared to announce a drastic change of position, at least to the media and public, when he set his red line over the use of chemical weapons. Beforehand, he was able to generally assess various states on a case-by-case basis as David Milne highlighted (2011), and how domestic public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome might respond to potential military intervention. It was during the Libya intervention, that Obama refused to be drawn into whether he had a foreign policy doctrine by warning against using "in a cookie-cutter fashion across the board" (2011), as cited in chapter four. However, Obama's red line forfeited his case-by-case approach because he set unconditional terms for what would prompt him to utilise militarily intervention that implied domestic public opinion could be overruled. In effect, Obama's red line gave the public impression that he did have a cookie-cutter in the shape of seeing unpredictable regimes using chemical weapons being met with military intervention, whether the American public may support it or not. As Peter Baker of the New York Times noted, Obama's terminology may have been "unscripted" when answering a question from the press, but he inadvertently "put the US in a bind on Syria" (2013).

Hillary Clinton argued that the red line had been effective in 2012, writing in her memoirs that, "the clear implication was that if the regime crossed that line, actions, potentially including military force, would be taken. In 2012, that threat seemed to be an effective deterrent, and Assad backed down" (2014:p.393). However, by the end of that year, on December 23, the Al-Bayadah quarter in the city, Homs, which was controlled by the anti-Assad Free Syrian Army group, suffered one of the first chemical weapons attack, in which approximately 100 residents were killed (Rogin, 2013). However, "the administration wanted to apply coercive pressure on Syria over C.W (chemical weapons) but was unwilling to issue threats explicitly holding regime survival at risk" (Bowen, Knopf & Moran, 2020). This reflected Obama's early missteps in in executing his smart power strategy

because he appeared to overestimate the hard power that he would be willing to use over the use of chemical weapons. The threat of military intervention was likely intended to pressure Assad into a diplomatic solution to destroy his chemical weapons, as happened with the Iran nuclear deal. Moreover, Obama had made the commitment to militarily intervene under such circumstances before being confident that he could build alliances to join such action. However, entering military intervention with alliance was crucial to his management of attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach, as Libya partially exemplified. Consequently, as Jack Holland highlighted, "Obama's 'red line' on chemical weapons use was arguably a case of rhetorical self-entrapment, as the administration was coerced by its own bold statements to support an interventionist line out of step with Obama's usual reluctance to seek military solutions to global crises" (2019:p.49).

Therefore, the Obama administration panicked by trying to establish what ramifications America could inflict on Assad for crossing his red line by using chemical weapons without knowing if certain options were viable for international allies, or the American public. Meanwhile the crisis in Syria was not static, and indeed it tangibly worsened on the ground. Firstly, there were more chemical weapon attacks as Obama was establishing how to approach the crisis, which further undermined his original red line. On March 19, 2013, another chemical weapons attack was launched in Khan al-Assal, killing at 26 people, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (Barnard, 2013). Days later, Obama reiterated during his visit to Israel, as part of a larger Middle East trip to the West Bank and Jordan, "that the Assad regime has lost all credibility and legitimacy. I think Assad must go…We have helped to mobilize the isolation of the Assad regime internationally. We have supported and recognized the opposition. We have provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support for humanitarian aid." (2013).

Furthermore, Obama addressed his refusal to use unilateral military intervention, and argued that the crisis needed international engagement, rather than America acting alone. "If your suggestion is, is that I have not acted unilaterally militarily inside of Syria, well, the response has been—or my response would be that, to the extent possible, I want to make sure that we're working as an international community to deal with this problem, because I think it's a world problem, not simply a United States problem"(Ibid). Obama had been consistent about his reluctance to use military intervention in Syria, especially since he believed it was outside America's national and security interests. Around a year beforehand, in March 2012, he stated that, "the notion that the way to solve every one of these problems is to deploy out military, that hasn't been true in the past and it won't be true now. We've got to think through what we do through the lens of what's going to be effective, but what's also critical for US security interests" (Obama). This demonstrated his

Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that preferred to solve problems multilaterally, and if possible through non-military means. However, Obama failed to consider, arguably again after his experience in Libya, that it would be difficult to persuade allies to facilitate the retrained Jeffersonian approach he wanted to intervene in Syria.

Obama made a second simple but important point about the Syrian conflict that had significant implications for approaching the international challenges of the crisis, as well as the domestic implications such as the sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Obama made the point about the Syrian crisis "which is probably obvious, is this is not easy. When you start seeing a civil war that has sectarian elements to it, and you've got a repressive government that is intent on maintaining power, and you have mistrust that has broken out along sectarian lines" (2013). This reiterates the point that the problems in the conflict were not static, but fluid, uncertain, with high risks, which as a Jeffersonian, Obama was clearly wary of. The possibility of greater involvement in the Syrian war also contradicted his broader Jeffersonian foreign policy approach, whereby "he wanted to be remembered for getting out of the Middle East wars, not embarking on new ones" (Baker, 2011). Obama's Jeffersonian beliefs further showed implicit awareness of the concerns amongst the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically by ruling out a ground troop intervention. He stated that "I do not foresee a scenario in which boots on the ground in Syria, American boots on the ground in Syria would not only be good for America, but also would be good for Syria" (2013). Obama's reasoning reflected his Jeffersonian instincts because he did not think that militarily intervening in Syria would be in US interests, especially when American were more sceptical towards such action, as well as experiencing economic difficulties. Furthermore, his rationale that ground troops would be bad for Syria, demonstrated his more pessimistic Jeffersonian worldview that America cannot easily promote its ideals of democracy and human rights through military intervention, especially in complex nations and situations.

By June 2013, Obama remained unsure of how he could improve the deteriorating situation which he believed "at most, it could be managed" (2013). Moreover, after the chemical weapons attack in Khan al-Assal, the American public expressed little interest in the conflict, let alone much support for America to take action as a result. The Pew Research Center, found in April 2013 that a margin of 45% to 31% of Americans favoured militarily intervening in Syria with its allies if Assad was confirmed to have used them against anti-government groups (2013). Additionally, only 27% said that America has a responsibility to do something about the Syria War, and that only 18% followed the news about the chemical weapons attacks closely (Ibid). At this point, the lack of vocal public opposition did not necessarily equate to an indifference or absence in the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. If anything, it risked aggravating the public more if motions were set to intervene, by

raising potential questions about the purpose or necessity of a proposed intervention when Obama explicitly expressed himself, doubt that it was right course of action to take through the conflict. "The question of strategic vision cut two ways. If Obama intervened too quickly the administration saw itself as becoming drawn into another Iraq, with all the attendant problems of managing the transition after Assad—something that had failed miserably in Iraq after 2003" (Fitzgerald & Ryan, 2014:p.120).

However, because the conflict was also not static, there were consequences on the ground whether there was US action or inaction. Therefore, Obama's "failure to respond effectively aggravated forces within Syria and amongst US allies within the region. Internal opposition groups had to turn to elsewhere for assistance; allies such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar began aid to more radical groups" (Ibid). This also undermined Obama's Jeffersonian restrained approach to Syria of attempting to support idealistic goals of democracy and human rights through providing aid to rebels. Obama and Rhodes "worried that heavier weapon systems might get into the wrong hands of al Nusra. Moreover, a no-fly zone was not in the US national interest and sending US troops was 'off the table'" (p.123, see also Baker, 2013). Obama's limited approach appeared to become unsustainable when chemical weapons were used in Ghouta, near Damascus in 2013, almost a year to the day Obama said that it would be a red line. However, Obama would discover that the memories of Iraq and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were not only raw in America. Its British ally that had joined in the Iraq War, similarly, had a war fatigued public that was sceptical about entering another conflict in the Middle East, which affected the decision-making of its politicians.

Obama's reckoning with US power and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and Iraq's reverberant effect amongst allies

On August 21, 2013, the Syrian opposition controlled area of Ghouta was attacked by rockets containing sarin, killing 1,127 people, according to the Syrian Network For Human Rights (2013). The attack happened a year and one day after Obama warned that the use of chemical weapons by Assad would be a 'red line'. Furthermore, it was the deadliest chemical weapons attack since the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s, when it was then used by Saddam Hussein (2013). Obama's response would perhaps encapsulate the difficulty he had in balancing his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach. The approach broadly tried to navigate a medium between promoting ideals and restraint due to concerns about the domestic implications of military intervention, by avoiding Wilsonian adventurism. Obama was therefore trying to espouse his belief in American exceptionalism, whilst

being sensitive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome at home, and the loss of international trust in American leadership post-Iraq.

Consequently, Obama's Jeffersonian instincts meant that he limited his proposed military proposal to airstrikes against Assad, rather than a ground troop invasion. Furthermore, even with this proposed small scale intervention, Obama did not want to take this action alone. As part of his smart power strategy, he wanted to build a united multinational coalition with allies to strengthen its legitimacy, especially as the action had virtually no chance of obtaining a UN resolution because Russia on the permanent security council was an ally of Assad. However, the legacy of the Iraq War also influenced America's British ally, as it also had a more sceptical general public towards military intervention.

When the US intervened in Libya, it was Obama who needed persuading by British and French allies to do so. However, when Obama asked US allies to join in a smaller military intervention on its own timetable to launch airstrikes, neither British parliamentarians, nor the British public could avoid analogous thinking to the Iraq War. This led to much more hesitancy amongst America's British ally towards the possibility of rushing into a war on the terms that the president was setting, with fears of entering another quagmire like the Iraq War. "British domestic opinion opposed involvement in another Middle Eastern conflict. Both the public and the press doubted the efficacy of military action following years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and after watching post-Gaddafi Libya slide into chaos" (Strong, 2015:p.1123). The British public was similarly experiencing heightened sensitivity of its own attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome provoked by its involvement in the Iraq War. According to YouGov, during the debate, 59% of Britons said that previous interventions in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq made them less likely to support intervention (2013). This provided some indication that the Iraq War had made the British general public similarly sceptical towards military intervention post-Iraq, like many Americans.

The fact that there was a Parliamentary vote at all on Syria exemplified the legacy of the Iraq War since it is the Royal prerogative of the British Crown to use military action without one that the prime minister can use on its behalf (Mills, 2018). However, the proposal to invade Iraq in 2003 was so divisive that the prime minister Tony Blair gave Parliament a vote. Thereafter, Parliament voted on these decisions, such as authorising British involvement in the Libya intervention. However, the true impact of the Iraq War of provoking a similar set of attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in Britain materialised during the debate about Syria. YouGov found that 60% of Britons opposed intervening in Syria based on the US intelligence that claimed Assad was responsible. James Strong also

highlighted that British parliamentarians based their judgement on whether to intervene by using three main criteria:

"First, they asked whether the use of force was actually necessary. Specifically, they doubted the evidence the government presented showing the Assad regime was responsible for the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Damascus. Distrust bred during debates over Iraq led many to speak out against the case for a further military engagement based primarily on evidence from secret intelligence" (2015:p.1131). This reflected that the misleading intelligence that Saddam possessed WMDs caused lasting scepticism towards a US rationale for military intervention. "Second, they questioned whether ministers possessed 'right authority' to order intervention. Specifically they expressed a more general lack of trust in official judgements, pointed to the absence of clear UN Security Council approval and highlighted the scale of public opposition" (Ibid). The absence of approval from the UN demonstrated that the Iraq War was firmly in the memory of parliamentarians and the British public. Therefore its own form of its attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome were heightened, making it harder to build support for military intervention, and therefore participate in one. "Finally, they worried about whether military action would succeed. Some thought the proposed intervention too small to make a difference. Others feared British entanglement and 'mission creep'" (Ibid). Strong exemplifies two equivalent concerns of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome overlapping in Britain. Some feared that the proposed intervention had little justification because they believed it would make little difference, whilst others worried that it risked becoming another quagmire by dragging the military into an unpredictable conflict. This was shown when the Labour opposition leader Ed Miliband, claimed that vote showed that they were listening to a public that "want us to learn the lessons of Iraq"(2013).

"The contrast between Obama's justification of action in Libya and inaction in Syria reveals the Jeffersonian underpinnings of Obama's approach" (Clarke & Ricketts, 2017). This was due to "his concern over the inability to get multilateral cover from European and Middle Eastern allies—as per Libya—and uncertainty over whether this would be the first step in an escalatory ladder leading to sustained 'boots-on-the-ground' military involvement in Syria" (Ibid). Obama's inability to persuade a historically reliable partner in military intervention to join, undoubtedly changed his calculations as it would derail his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint, and risk provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. As he said himself that "there's no doubt that the failure of the vote in Parliament had some impact" (2016). Jake Sullivan, then the National Security Advisor to Vice President Joe Biden, emphasised the significance of not having the support of a close ally. He stated that, "it was a challenging moment for all of us. This would have been the first time on a military operation the United States would be undertaking in quite some time where the U.K wouldn't be at

our side" (Ibid). This undermined Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards military intervention that he tried to formulate by saving US resources from costly conflicts through relying more on allies. Additionally, his smart power strategy showed its limitations by failing to strengthen legitimacy for his proposed intervention in Syria through having a wide international coalition. Obama himself expressed doubts about the accuracy of US intelligence that showed the Iraq War played on his mind too when he asked if it was a "slam dunk" (2013) that Assad was responsible for the attack (2013). That was the exact phrase used by George W. Bush's CIA Director George Tenet when making the case that Saddam possessed WMDs (Woodward, 2004). Nevertheless, it did not derail Obama's overall Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that listened to domestic concerns amongst the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by forcing him to pursue Wilsonian ideals with little support beyond France. Indeed, Obama solidified his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach by asking for Congressional support to measure the public opinion of their constituents.

Understandably, this appeared like Obama was trying to avoid military intervention by asking a Republican controlled House of Representatives that had been oppositional throughout his presidency. However, it reflected his adherence to Jeffersonian beliefs of avoiding Executive overreach when there was little international support for military intervention. Obama regarded the international support through NATO, and lukewarm public opinion for the Libya intervention's limited scope to provide it with enough legitimacy to overlook Congress. However, without significant international support over Syria, Obama was further pressured to try to build a domestic political consensus for what would be unilateral military action, including from some figures in his administration.

Obama's Special Assistant and Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region between 2013 and 2015, Phil Gordon, recalled that a legal advisor "reminded the president that he had taken a pretty strong stand that presidents should have Congressional authority for military action. And I remember the president said in an almost irritated sort of way saying, 'I remember very well what position I took during the campaign'"(2016). Therefore, Obama further demonstrated his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach by remaining attentive to American public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in his decision-making towards Syria. Obama confirmed this when he acknowledged retrospectively that at the time, "I was concerned that I might be contradicting my own position. I had actually written that where American core interests are not immediately threatened, it is important for us to take pause and try to mobilize public opinion" (Ibid). In this attempt, Obama tried to obtain bipartisan support, to ensure as Arhtur Vandenberg said, that "politics stops at the water's edge" (1947) by having a united national position. In this spirit, Obama invited the Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner, who originally gave his

backing, stating, "I am going to support the president's call for action" (2013), as Obama emphasised that "we will be stronger if we take action together as one nation" (2016).

However, by the time Obama went to the G20 Summit in Saint Petersburg days later, where Syria was a priority, Congresspeople were receiving opposition from their constituents. This reflected a Gallup poll days earlier, that found only 36% approved of military intervention, whilst 51% opposed (2013). Rhodes reflected on how the bad memories of the Iraq War and in effect, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome though he does not use the term, not only made the American public sceptical towards intervening in Syria, but allies too. He stated that: "I felt the burden on Obama. He had to respond to this awful event in Syria while bearing the additional weight of the war in Iraq—which caused his own intelligence community to be cautious, his military to be wary of a slippery slope, his closest allies to distrust U.S.-led military adventures in the Middle East, the press to be more sceptical of presidential statements, the public to oppose U.S. wars overseas, and Congress to see matters of war and peace as political issues to be exploited" (2018). This analogous thinking was not a useful way to analyse how to respond to a contemporary conflict, and it "raised the question of whether the president had overlearned from his predecessor's mistakes—and thus committed the opposite errors himself" (Brands, 2018:p.51). Nevertheless, it reflected the potent effect that the Iraq War had, and the heightened attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome it provoked. Obama's Ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul similarly said on reflection that public opposition was "churning in the back of his head" (2016), during the G20 Summit.

The lack of political support meant that administration officials made comments that were beginning to make military action seem futile in its efforts to pacify opposition. Richard Johnson highlighted that "Secretary of State John Kerry ludicrously tried to assure the American public that if there were going to be bombings in Syria, they would be 'unbelievably small' (2013)" (2021:p.101). However, in attempting to soothe the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and scepticism towards military intervention, Obama started to undermine his Jeffersonian pragmatism. The purpose of the proposed action was becoming meaningless if it was not going to improve the situation on the ground, which in itself was weakening its strategic and public case. This perception was reinforced when the Pew Research Center found that only 35% of Americans thought Obama had given a clear explanation for airstrikes, and 54% felt he had not (2013). Consequently, Obama decided to work with Putin take negotiate the destruction of Assad's chemical weapons and call off a Congressional vote on military intervention.

Obama's decision to abandon his red line often receives criticism for failing to follow his words with action, therefore allowing the use of chemical weapons to be unpunished. "Obama's

critics claim that the decision undermined American credibility, weakened international norms, and showed US moral indifference " (Telhami, 2016). Amongst these critics were Obama's political allies who were then former administration members such as Hillary Clinton said, "if you say you're going to strike you have to strike" (Golberg, 2016), whilst Panetta similarly said when speaking this research that, "my concern was more related to the credibility of the United States that once the president establishes a red line…it's very important for the president to stand by his word because otherwise it impacts on his credibility" (2021).

However, Obama reflected his Jeffersonian pragmatism in his criticism of the potentially destructive consequences of trying to maintain credibility and honouring one's word can have. "Obama argued that the US foreign policy establishment attaches too much weight on credibility" (Bowen, Knopf & Moran, 2020). When explaining why he changed his position on Syria, "dropping bombs on someone to prove you're willing to drop bombs on someone is just about the worst reason to use force" (Goldberg, 2016). This further exemplified that Obama was sensitive to attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, not only because of the difficulty in building support, but because he recognised that the proposed action did not have a clear enough rationale beyond showing will-power to use military intervention. It also implicitly rebutted the Jacksonian belief that influenced neoconservatives in honouring one's word which George W. Bush exemplified when justifying the removal of Saddam post-presidency. When discussing the ultimatum he gave Saddam to voluntarily leave or face an invasion, Bush remarked that "when you say something as president you better mean it" (2014). Yet, this thinking as far as Obama was concerned, led America in the Iraq morass that he was determined to learn from, and take public anxieties of repeating a similar outcome seriously. Obama achieved tangible desired results that aligned with Nye's view of preserving and enhancing power by negotiating the destruction of 1,300 tonnes of weapons and precursor chemicals, 1,200 munitions and 27 production facilities. Furthermore, this was achieved with the cooperation of Russia and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The chemical weapons expert and scholar at George Mason University, Gregory Koblentz called this "one of the greatest non-proliferation achievements of the 21st century" (2023).

Obama further illustrated his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach in his rationale to not intervene because of the challenging domestic political and economic circumstances that made intervention unviable. On reflection, Obama stated that, "the United States might have been in a position to take on a burden of trying to impose peace inside of Syria if we hadn't had a previous decade that had drained our military, drained our treasury, drained the political capital" (2016). This was not necessarily satisfactory, either in execution or even for the public. The Pew Research Center found that only 33% of Americans approved of his handling of Syria whilst 57% disapproved (2013).

This was despite their calls for greater restraint were being listened to more by the president in his decision-making, and getting the outcome they wanted on Syria. This reflected the "somewhat schizophrenic split between Obama's grand strategy—between continued American primacy and greater restraint in a post-American world—was also present within the American population" (Lofflmann, 2019:p.197).

Undoubtedly, Obama appeared to show similar indecision to Carter by favouring a certain policy approach, only to change his mind. However, he was not so much indecisive, and he was even relatively consistent in his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of keeping out of conflicts outside direct US interests when he lacked international support. Instead he was perhaps naïve in expecting US allies to facilitate his desire for a Jeffersonian military intervention without knowing he had their support. Obama did have greater success in implementing a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that considered the domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and had greater success than Carter in discussing the limits of American power. Clearly, the US public was more ready for this compared to the height of the Cold War, but Obama was also able to more skilfully bring this difficult subject into the centre of the debate about America's foreign policy approach. Obama's concern about the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and domestic public opinion heavily weighed on his mind in his decision to call of the Congressional vote when explaining his decision. He said, "one man wrote to me that we are 'still recovering from our involvement in Iraq'. A veteran put it more bluntly: 'this nation is sick and tired of war'. My answer is simple: I will not put American boots on the ground in Syria. I will not pursue an open-ended action like Iraq" (2013). Furthermore, he did not abandon American exceptionalism, and emphasised his belief in it when explaining his change towards diplomacy on his Syria policy. He stated that, "America is not the world's policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong. But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death...I believe we should act. That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional" (2013).

Melvyn Leffler argued that Bush was partly driven into the Iraq War by "hubris" (2023) show by his overconfidence in what American military power could achieve. Obama therefore made a significant statement as a US president by challenging a post-Cold War a hubristic and triumphalist mood by acknowledging that American military power has limits, which needs to be used responsibly with domestic public support. Critics argued that "US inaction in Syria and its reluctance to lead an international effort creates a more serious argument of American decline, than the country's domestic and economic problems" (Kanat, 2013). However, Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach calculated that the Syria War had little importance to American power in the international system. Syria was not in America's direct national interest, and the debate to take action was more

about moral arguments which Obama deemed not to be more significant than harming domestic stability by provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The involvement later of its rival Russia also had a limited effect on US power in the international system. Moreover, Obama kept to his Jeffersonian principles through using military intervention in the national interest in the Middle East, shown by his authorising of airstrikes in Syria and Iraq against IS in 2014 as they posed a national security threat. Therefore, Obama was able to bring greater focus to combatting threats, whilst also more broadly directing America's foreign policy approach away from the Middle East. Additionally, gave domestic public opinion and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome a larger role in US foreign policymaking to show more restraint, and encourage more questioning about how America can promote their ideals worldwide more effectively.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Obama managed military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that considered the domestic implications of his decision-making. It analysed how he developed his smart power strategy for policy by using a combination of hard power instruments of coercion that considered military intervention, as well as soft power through persuasion. It produced some diplomatic achievements, particularly the Iran nuclear deal that used hard power sanctions, and the threat of military action, to pressure Iran to negotiate, whilst using soft power and co-opting to reduce its enriched uranium levels in return for sanctions relief.

Furthermore, Obama's smart power strategy had some success in limited and specific military operations, to help enhance US soft power amongst Muslim countries by combatting al-Qaeda's Islamic terrorism more effectively and reducing its influence. Furthermore, the Jeffersonian approach of small-scale and low cost military action helped manage the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by avoiding using many boots on the ground and having quick and specific objectives. It reflected more broadly, Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism, which was not unideological, and he attempted to think how he could promote US ideals of democracy and liberty most effectively.

Obama put his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach and smart power strategy into action in the military intervention in Libya. This tried to balance US interest with its ideals of defending human rights, whilst trying to reduce its foreign policy costs and consider the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically through encouraging more burden-sharing amongst allies. Obama demonstrated his Jeffersonian beliefs by regarding the Libya intervention to be in the national interest because there was a risk of a refugee crisis into Europe that would affect allies. Simultaneously, Obama's idealistic beliefs made him believe that America needed act as a unique

nation because of the human rights abuses taking place. Obama achieved some of his Jeffersonian aims by building a large international coalition with NATO and the Arab League with a UN mandate. He only used airstrikes to avoid a possible military quagmire; however, he could not rely as easily on allies as he had hoped, despite their agreement that Britain and France would predominantly rebuild Libya post-Gaddafi. Consequently, Obama tailored the Libya intervention in a way that it was palatable to Americans and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. However, this did not consider enough what was needed on the ground, causing similar problems to post-Saddam Iraq. There was an eruption of violence and civil war, albeit the US was not an occupying power this time.

Finally, the chapter has challenged the conventional analysis of Obama's approach to the Syrian War and his red line on Assad's use of chemical weapons. It explored how Obama Jeffersonian foreign policy approach did not regard Syria to be significant to the national interest, but he created a problem for himself with his self-imposed red line. He therefore partially abandoned his pragmatic approach without certainty that he could rely on international or domestic support for action, when America and its allies were war weary post-Iraq. When his red line was put to the test when Assad used chemical weapons, Obama could not build the international or domestic support that he set for as criteria to be able to intervene. Instead, many Americans in the public and Congress, as well as British allies, still had the memories of the Iraq War, and subsequently distrusted the rationale for intervening in Syria. Whilst Obama received criticism for undermining American credibility in its foreign policy approach, the chapter argues that he achieved more than what an airstrike would have, by negotiating the destruction of Assad's weapons. Furthermore, Obama was evidently unconvinced by concerns about credibility, since keeping one's word in his view, drew America into the Iraq War, by promising to remove Saddam, and getting into a military quagmire subsequently. Obama therefore had greater success as a Jeffersonian in questioning what America can achieve with its significant power, and how it can promote its ideals as the exceptional nation he believes it is, which his predecessor Jimmy Carter failed to do. An important reason for this was because the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had gained legitimacy, and Obama considered that carefully in his decision-making. Far from embracing American decline, Obama was a president who listened to these domestic concerns about military intervention. In doing so, he concluded that it was more important to try to protect the union at home, than go abroad in search of monsters to destroy.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

Using primary and secondary sources, and elite interviews, this research has studied how these public attitudes represent more than anti-war views that simply want to constrain US foreign policymaking. Instead, it has a more significant role in the debate around the subject of American exceptionalism, and how the United States should promote its ideals. This is a debate that most presidents have had to engage with, even though the thesis mainly discusses George W. Bush and Barack Obama. This research has therefore shown that the term, the 'Vietnam Syndrome', requires further exploration to understand its significance within American public opinion that advocates for having a greater role in decision-making on military intervention and the global role that America should have. It explained how the wars in Vietnam and Iraq were linked because the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome catalysed neoconservatism in response that later influenced the approach to the Iraq War that became important moments for supporters of restraint.

Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions of Hamiltonians, Jeffersonianism, Wilsonianism and Jacksonians are used as a theoretical framework. This theoretical approach has helped highlight how elements of the American public and policymakers differ in how they socially and culturally view themselves and has subsequently influenced their respective foreign policy approaches to military intervention. The research illustrates how the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the frustration towards public caution towards military intervention amongst Cold War hawks was instrumental to developing the neoconservative foreign policy approach. This was a combination of Wilsonian democracy promotion through military intervention, and Jacksonian ferocity to maximise US power and achieve primacy by nullifying threats that later influenced their approach to the 2003 Iraq War. Furthermore, it explains how the failures of the Iraq War provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and gave them more political space and legitimacy in US foreign policy debate compared to the Cold War era. Furthermore, Obama as a candidate and president became a figurehead for the attitudes of Vietnam Syndrome, whereby he heavily considered those attitudes and the lessons from Iraq in his foreign policy approach towards military intervention, by favouring Jeffersonian restraint.

The thesis challenges the original interpretation of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome developed by Cold War foreign policy hawks such as Ronald Reagan, who coined the term to pejoratively portray public caution towards military intervention as plainly anti-war and even anti-American. The research posits that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome are not part of an illness amongst Americans as the term 'syndrome' suggests. Instead the attitudes are part of asking broadly,

for four criteria for military intervention to be met: firstly by engaging more with the public about a possible intervention to understand its views and to build stable support, secondly, by providing a clear rationale to provide transparency for trust, thirdly, for policymakers to be responsive to public opinion of an intervention and whether its costs remain tolerable for its purpose, and finally, to have an exit strategy to avoid a quagmire (Ryan, 2007).

Therefore, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome should not necessarily be perceived as being anti-war. Instead they should be regarded as a sign of the American public encouraging greater introspection about how effectively military intervention can promote American interests and its ideals of democracy, free markets, and liberty abroad. The attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, and how US foreign policymakers respond to them are therefore an important part of the broader subject of American exceptionalism and debates surrounding it. Specifically, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome addresses whether to promote American values proactively as a crusader and vindicator through military intervention, or with restraint for the world to emulate them as an exemplar. The thesis has been careful not to overstate the potency of the attitudes of Vietnam Syndrome in the discussion about America's global role and its foreign policy approach. This debate long precedes the aftermath of the Vietnam War, dating back to President George Washington's warning against foreign entanglements in his farewell address and it continues today. More specifically, it reflects that concerns about the justification for warfare and the risk of miliary quagmires have existed since the Founding Fathers. Furthermore, whilst it was in a far more limited capacity, public opinion had some role in the decision-making towards military action and its purpose in the 1844 election. The result gave James Polk's Manifest Destiny campaign a mandate to militarily expand Westwards in the claim that America has divine duty to spread democracy and liberty that consequently displaced natives.

Nevertheless, this research identifies the Vietnam War as a significant fault-line in the debate of the role of military intervention to promote US ideals that the American public began to participate more in, and consequently have a greater effect in policymaking. This period was a time when public opinion was demanding and achieving a greater say during the Vietnam War, particularly because of the draft that put American lives at stake. It also coincided with domestic political tensions around civil rights, which itself created division about America's moral leadership and its credibility. Furthermore, the conflict was also America's first significant large-scale military failure. This began to provoke deeper questions amongst the public about America's role as a global moral leader and its use of military intervention in the form of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that policymakers had to respond to.

In addition, the thesis builds on the existing scholarship about the understanding of how sentiments of the Vietnam Syndrome inspired the neoconservative movement in opposition to them that was spearheaded by the Democratic senator, Henry Jackson. Neoconservatism materialised in the Jacksonian pursuit of global primacy and sensitivity towards threats, alongside some Wilsonian ideals of democracy promotion through military force. The neoconservative worldview became more prominent in light of the failure of the Vietnam War amongst those who were frustrated by US public caution towards military intervention and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. The neoconservatives' crusader interpretation of American exceptionalism believes that US superiority is globally advantageous, and that it has an indispensable role to promote freedom and democracy that was prioritised over the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. They disputed the need to adhere to the 'lessons of Vietnam' that warned of similar morasses in future military interventions, of which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst Americans recalled. Instead, neoconservatives argued that it was more important to remember the 'lessons of Munich'. They also went a step further in their interpretation that not only emphasised the need to confront dictators, but argued that American restraint from exercising its power and moral leadership can result in catastrophes on the scale of the Holocaust. Their worldview that it was necessary to enhance US power through unilateral military intervention, with the hope of bringing democracy, shaped their approach to the Iraq War when they gained influence in the George W. Bush administration. Having believed that Saddam Hussein should have been ousted during the 1991 Gulf War during America's unipolar moment and suspecting afterwards that he was developing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), neoconservatives believed that any threat to the US needed to be vanquished post-9/11. They regarded the 'lessons of Vietnam' and the cautious attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that influenced US foreign policymaking as partly responsible for such an attack being able to happen.

The research then dissects how the failures of the Iraq War inflamed the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Furthermore, it explains how the attitudes developed and gained greater legitimacy in broader US foreign policy debate during the Iraq War, compared to the Vietnam War, and acknowledging them became part of Obama's presidential platform. The failures of the Iraq War, and the broader geopolitical environment of no perceived existential threat such as Communism during the Cold War, encouraged more introspection amongst Americans towards the use of military intervention that Obama's Jeffersonian restraint resonated with. The analysis argues that Obama did not merely work within the constraints of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, as for example, the Powell Doctrine did in its approach to the Gulf War. Obama attempted to address the deeper questions that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome asked by trying to establish the purpose of military intervention to America's foreign policy approach during domestically challenging times

economically and politically. He did this by trying to navigate how he that could reinvigorate and further improve America's moral leadership which he believed it possessed as an exceptional nation when domestic and international voices questioned this belief. The attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome therefore undoubtedly made him consider the domestic implications of foreign policymaking, and affected his considerations of military intervention, as seen in Libya and Syria.

This chapter will bring together the arguments of the previous chapters to demonstrate how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had a significant connection to the Iraq War. This is firstly through the neoconservatives' response to them in their decision-making towards the Iraq War, and secondly because of how its relevance grew post-Iraq by influencing Obama's policymaking more tangibly in his considerations of using military intervention. The first section will review the main arguments of the research and discuss how it has provided a well-rounded understanding of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and its impact on US foreign policymaking. It will then further analyse the different reactions from neoconservatives that led to the Iraq War and how Obama's restraint America's foreign policy approach towards military intervention. The next section will then address the key contributions that the thesis makes to existing academic literature on US foreign policy. It will also explore what can be learnt from the different responses by US foreign policymakers to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome among scholars and policymakers in America and the world.

The main arguments

This research has provided new and unique insight into the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome particularly through making two central arguments. The introductory chapter contends that these attitudes amongst the American public needs further examination of its role in the debates about US foreign policymaking towards military intervention. The research has argued that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome should be considered to be more significant than reflecting a hesitancy to enter conflicts after failure because of a psychological 'illness' or 'syndrome' through anti-war sentiments. Instead it should be regarded as a call for deeper introspection about the role of military intervention to promoting US ideals and interests. Therefore they are a key part of the broader debate of American exceptionalism about whether to behave as a crusader or exemplar in America's foreign policy approach.

Secondly, the first chapter introduces the argument that there are two links between the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the Iraq War that have been underdeveloped. Firstly, the neoconservative movement and its foreign policy approach largely grew in direct response and opposition to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. Neoconservatives argued that military

intervention should be readily used to achieve Jacksonian primacy and promote Wilsonian ideals of democracy, free markets, and liberty to combat totalitarian regimes that are hostile to US interests. Therefore, they believed that public caution reflected through the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome should not undermine these objectives, which later influenced their approach to the Iraq War.

The other underdeveloped link that has been identified is that Iraq War and its failures provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome compared to other conflicts post-Vietnam up to this point- and that the introspection that this section of the American public wanted could further develop compared to the Vietnam era. There was of course no obvious superpower rival to continue fighting during the Iraq War's failure, unlike the Cold War when the Soviet Union existed. Additionally, Obama as a candidate and president showed sensitivity to these concerns through his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint and was more disciplined than Jimmy Carter's post-Vietnam. The connection between the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and public scepticism towards military intervention with the Iraq War has been previously made in US foreign policy scholarship (Freedman, 2005, Mueller, 2005 Dumbrell, 2007 et al) to name only a few. However, this research posits that these previous discussions have made relatively casual comparisons between the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome with the Iraq War, due to both conflicts ending in failure. The thesis addresses this need to add to the existing scholarship by further exploring how the sentiments developed and became more significant to US foreign policymaking particularly under Obama. His foreign policy approach considered of the domestic implications of military intervention, and how America could reflect on improving its global leadership to promote its ideals, which the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome within the American public wanted.

Chapter two examined how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome was significant to how the neoconservative movement formulated as a foreign policy approach. Cold War hawks such as Henry Jackson, and the support that he gathered developed amongst liberal interventionists, believed that America should continue to readily use military intervention to promote US ideals and maximise its power. Many neoconservatives were in the Democratic Party, such as Jackson himself, having supported President John F. Kennedy's militaristic approach of containing Communism, and therefore defended the Vietnam War. These included individuals that worked for Jackson and became influential in the George W. Bush administration as the strongest advocates of the Iraq War, such as Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith and Richard Perle. The neoconservative foreign policy approach was therefore largely in response to domestic public caution post-Vietnam War. They regarded the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome as defeatist to achieving a successful military intervention, and argued that the 'lessons of Munich' should be the paradigm to follow to prevent

similar atrocities to the Holocaust in World War Two by America fulfilling its exceptional and moral role through using military intervention. They therefore rejected the 'lessons of Vietnam' and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that warned to avoid risking a similar costly quagmire to the Vietnam War that lacked a clear purpose. The neoconservatives believed that America needed to continue to be wary of post-Cold War threats and overcome as they saw, the defeatist attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. They believed the best way to address these attitudes was by having successful military interventions by nullifying enemies such as Saddam who they suspected of possessing WMDs by removing him and promoting democracy in Iraq. The 9/11 attacks solidified their belief that any perceived threat had to be aggressively defeated through military intervention, making the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome marginal in their decision-making.

The chapter used Mead's theoretical framework to demonstrate to dissect how neoconservatives shared some Wilsonian ideals of democracy promotion through military intervention, combined with Jacksonian principles of maximising power. However, the chapter argues that neoconservatives used Wilsonian ideals as more of a rhetorical justification to the American public, but frequently displayed a Jacksonian foreign policy approach. This was through advocating unilateral military action out of their belief of acting in narrow interest to enhance US power and achieve primacy, rather than Wilsonian moral grounds through using international institutions. Reagan certainly at used moralistic language to justify supporting contras in the aim to achieve primacy and defeat the Soviet Union, whilst post-Cold War neoconservatives used more Wilsonian rhetoric to advocate for expanding US democracy promotion abroad through military intervention with no ideological rival to counter it. Nevertheless, the neoconservatives frequently attacked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by employing Jacksonian nationalism in response to them, as well as moralistic Wilsonian rhetoric. They believed that this was the most effective way to address the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, since they saw them as defeatist behaviour that undermined military interventions, rather than provide useful introspection to improve the chances of future success.

Charles Krauthammer argued that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome should largely be dismissed in his 'Unipolar Moment' (1991) article. Moreover, he acknowledged what he interchangeably called 'democratic realism', or 'democratic globalism' after the Iraq War had begun, which he closely connected to neoconservatism was more realist, or what could be called Jacksonian, rather than Wilsonian. "Democratic globalism is not Wilsonian. Its attractiveness is precisely that it shares realism's insights about the centrality of power. Its attractiveness is precisely that it has appropriate contempt for the fictional legalisms of liberal internationalism" (2004:p.15). This largely mirrors the neoconservatives' hybrid of Wilsonian and Jacksonian principles, which claimed to

support democratic allies in politically hostile environments and those that share similar threats and enemies with America. This links back to the neoconservatives' emphasis on the 'lessons of Munich', rather than listening much to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through their support for Israel, particularly from the Six-Day-War onwards. They believed that supporting a democracy in an undemocratic region was important to US interests, and important to fighting the concurrent threat of Islamic terrorism. Nevertheless, the neoconservatives largely used Jacksonian arguments to build domestic support for the Iraq War, and in their approach towards the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by claiming that Saddam directly threatened US security by possessing WMDs. The Bush administration's emphasis on threats particularly resonated with many Americans amidst the chaos of 9/11 as inhibitions about entering 'another Vietnam', and the sensitivity of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome consequently decreased.

Chapter three explained how the Iraq War and its failures after Saddam was removed, specifically provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome domestically, and encouraged greater self-examination about America's use of military intervention to promote its ideals. Furthermore, it analysed how the quagmire of the Iraq War became a presidential platform for Obama through his encouragement of Jeffersonian restraint that considered US public opinion in foreign policymaking. It first dissected the military failures of the Iraq War that caused a US occupation that the Bush administration had not anticipated. The Bush administration deployed the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld's Jacksonian shock and awe strategy that used rapid and overwhelming military power with a light footprint that avoided significant US fatalities and swiftly removed Saddam. However, Bush insufficiently planned for the challenges of managing a post-Saddam Iraq and facilitating the conditions to bring political stability.

George W. Bush's Vice President, Dick Cheney, was an ardent supporter of invading Iraq post-9/11 having wanted to nullify any potential threat to America. Cheney previously agreed with George H.W. Bush when serving as his Secretary of Defense that only removing the Iraqi army out of Kuwait was the correct decision. When Cheney defended George H.W. Bush's decision in 1994, he stated that, "once you got to Iraq and took over, took down Saddam Hussein's government, then what are you going to put in its place?...it's a quagmire" (1994). Similarly, according to Bob Woodward, George W. Bush's Secretary of State, Colin Powell, warned in 2002, and counter the administration members who were pushing for war, such as Vice President Cheney, that "'you are going to the proud owner of 25 million people...you'll own it all'. Privately, Powell and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage called this the Pottery Barn rule: You break it, you own it" (2004:p.150). However, in the build-up to the Iraq War, as Gideon Rose highlighted, "the George W. Bush administration got around that

problem by ignoring it. Its war plan lacked an ending—and so, unsurprisingly, the war never really ended, with the conflict lurching from one battle to another for years to come" (2024).

Bush's 'de-Ba'athification' policy severely undermined the effort to reconstruct Iraq into the Wilsonian liberal democracy which he did not believe would need much US involvement by barring any member of the Ba'athist regime that understood . Additionally, it created a security vacuum that made it difficult to bring any political and civil stability through the disbanding of the Iraqi military and police. Many of them subsequently joined and strengthened an insurgency with state weapons and naturally, greater understanding of the country they were fighting in compared to the Americans. It also empowered al-Qaed in Iraq through its joining of the insurgency, after Islamic extremism had largely been contained under Saddam's secular, albeit autocratic regime. Consequently, the US military became entangled in insurgency and asymmetric warfare, not dissimilar to fighting in territory unfamiliar to them, as they did in Vietnam that later erupted into a sectarian civil war. Bush was not completely unresponsive to public opinion when the war continued longer than expected, reflected by hist attempt to emphasise that its purpose remained justified to combat international terrorism. Nevertheless, whilst his 2007 troop surge helped decrease the violence, by then a sense of public dissatisfaction had set, with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome becoming prevalent, as many Americans believed the war was unjustified, begun under false pretences, and become too long like another Vietnam (Gallup).

In addition to the Iraq War becoming a quagmire on the battlefield, its political failures through lacking transparency, such as Saddam's not possessing WMDs, nor having links to al-Qaeda quickly eroded domestic support. American public support for the Iraq War proved to be more circumstantial and fickle in light of the post-9/11 fearful atmosphere. Therefore, the broad consensus that the Iraq War had failed allowed more sober reflection about the role of military intervention in promoting US ideals that gave the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome more legitimacy. Contrastingly, the Vietnam War provoked multiple divisions in American political society such as civil rights, and the draft, which brought the war closer to home which made the debate less focused about foreign policy reform and self-reflection. Moreover, even though the Vietnam War also lacked transparency, as proven by revelations of the secret bombing of Cambodia and Laois, as well as the Pentagon Papers leaks in 1971, there was still division over its purpose in fighting Communism. The Iraq War however, lacked a perceived existential threat once it showed to have no links to the threat of WMDs or al-Qaeda which allowed more political space to re-evaluate the use of military intervention. Furthermore, the neoconservatives' Wilsonian and moral justification for the Iraq War to promote democracy and liberty were undermined by the Bush administration's more Jacksonian conduct of the conflict. This was demonstrated by the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal when US soldiers abused

inmates, adhering closer to the Jacksonian approaches and the belief that enemies are dishonorable and therefore do not deserve to be treated under rules of war that they themselves would abuse.

Obama's consistent opposition to the Iraq War before it even begun, and his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that considered the domestic implications of using military intervention by advocating restraint, resonated with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. There was a sense amongst this section of the American public that believed that Obama represented change. This was through his encouragement to re-examine how America promotes its ideals, and the role of public opinion in using military intervention in US foreign policymaking to do so. Nevertheless, Obama was also set the challenging task of the public demanding a change in America's foreign policy approach towards greater restraint, whilst simultaneously wanting less focus on international affairs when reform required attention to implement. Moreover, although Obama's 2008 presidential campaign largely focused on change, his foreign policy approach supported fairly conventional multilateral diplomacy and military intervention after Bush's radical unilateral military intervention and crusading democracy promotion.

Chapter four explored how Obama developed a foreign policy doctrine that attempted to address sensitive domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through articulating Jeffersonian principles of restraint through democracy promotion as more of an exemplar. This was demonstrated through his preference for diplomatic approaches to geopolitics, rather than military intervention, which he wanted to use judiciously. The chapter first contextualised US foreign policy doctrines to outline how they were being defined to bring an understanding of how Obama's foreign policy approach and articulation of a doctrine fits into US foreign policy analysis. The chapter then challenged previous claims made during the early stages of Obama's presidency that he did not have a doctrine. It argued that he did have one which involved systematically beginning to undo Bush's two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He hoped that this would then allow him to form a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint through promoting greater diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Muslim states. Obama conveyed this message in his 2009 Cairo speech, which was just as much about communicating to Americans as it was to the people in the region he was speaking to. He said that under his foreign policy approach, America would not impose its political ideals on others, though he kept to the democracy tradition of wanting to see these ideals flourish as universal values . Obama therefore tried to communicate to both international and domestic audiences that America was departing from Bush's approach of military intervention to politically shape the world, and therefore domestic resources would not be extensively used for such adventurism.

Obama's Jeffersonian restraint towards the MENA was on display during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, which was part of the early stages of the Arab Spring. He supported the aspirations of the Egyptian people wanting liberal and democratic reforms, but refused to become directly involved in how they would try to bring them. He used the influence of the American presidency in the region by withdrawing support from the long-term strategic ally and dictator, Hosni Mubarak. However, Obama kept to a Jeffersonian foreign policy tradition, and his message in the Cario speech that America would not impose a political system. This was through encouraging the local population to shape their own future ultimately towards America's example as a liberal democracy. Moreover, this allowed Obama to broadly continue his shift towards restraint in the MENA that the domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had wanted. This was through completing the military withdrawal from Iraq in the same year, and decreasing the troops in Afghanistan to narrow the objectives to counterterrorism from idealistic democracy promotion in a complex country.

Furthermore, this allowed Obama to pivot and reallocate resources in America's foreign policy approach towards the emerging power, China. Although Obama's retrenchment from the MENA led to claims that this represented US decline (Gerges, 2013), and reflected relative decline, it actually stemmed the absolute trend by addressing the larger threat of China to US power in the international system. Obama's Jeffersonian foreign policy approach meant that he sought to use multilateral economic and diplomatic instruments, such as the Transpacific Partnership to counter China's global economic influence, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to curb Iran's nuclear capabilities.

The chapter then discussed how Obama did formulate a foreign policy doctrine, in which he grappled with his complex view of American exceptionalism. In the process, he tried to navigate how America could reflect on how it promotes its ideals to be a credible leader to promote them abroad. He was therefore responsive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, as he believed the that the American public had an important role in establishing this. The Jeffersonian Carter post-Vietnam, also encouraged deeper self-examination, but emphasised the crisis this brought, rather than hopeful tone to carry the public with him to find solutions. In contrast, Obama more optimistic approach focused on how to further improve America's practicing and promoting of its ideals of democracy and liberty abroad that Obama believes it possesses. The Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that Obama consequently formulated with the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome in mind, may have focused on the possible, but he believed that a lot could be achieved by using greater multilateralism. This was through promoting international institutions and law, including when using military intervention if necessary. This form of military intervention would also be resorted to after diplomacy was exhausted for geopolitical challenges outside America's direct national interest to

promote its ideals collectively. Obama's more diplomatic and Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint helped achieve the Iran nuclear deal by seeking a resolution that avoided war to curb its capabilities, and avoid provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by risking another large-scale war in the MENA.

In his 2014 West Bank speech, Obama reserved the right to use unilateral military action for direct national security threats through smaller and more targeted operations. This was exemplified by Obama's Jeffersonian execution of the killing of bin Laden, whereby it was calculated with a specific purpose to kill a proven national security threat as the individual that planned 9/11, and avoided large-scale boots on the ground and high fatalities. This therefore ran little risk of provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, but Obama's preference towards small operations was not without controversy. His expansion of drone warfare for example, though as the chapter cited, had the majority of American support the action because it kept troops out of harm's way, raised ethical concerns. Furthermore, Obama's preference for small military operations worked for specific objectives, and avoiding the antagonising of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, but it did not deter the threat of state military adversaries, as Russia demonstrated by its 2014 annexation of the Crimea. Although Obama did not regard the territory to be in America's core national interests, it showed the limits of his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach to deter aggressive state rivals. Furthermore, it reflected how US adversaries exploited the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and the US government's subsequent lack of proactiveness in foreign policymaking. Furthermore, Putin exploited the weakening of international rules caused by the Iraq War. "Putin uses the decision to invade Iraq, as well as the NATO humanitarian intervention in Kosovo, to justify Russia's actions in Crime" (Messmer, 2023).

The final section of the chapter argued that the Obama Doctrine of restraint and the influence of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and domestic politics in US foreign policymaking endured post-presidency. This was demonstrated by Donald Trump's 'America First' rhetoric that appealed to Jacksonian nationalism amongst the American public and sections of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome that wanted more restraint. This manifested by his foreign policy approach that showing little interest in global events outside direct US interests, or appetite for building international cooperation, including with traditional allies. Joe Biden also urged restraint early into his presidency that shared Obama's Jeffersonian concerns regarding the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome through the belief that America's democratic stability at home needed to be prioritised before crusading abroad. This was a particularly pertinent and immediate challenge for Biden after Trump refused to concede defeat in the 2020 election, resulting in the January 6th insurrection to try to overturn democracy, and has since encouraged distrust towards America's political institutions

and processes. Moreover, Obama's legacy somewhat endured through the continuation, and eventuality of militarily withdrawing from Afghanistan. Although the operation itself was undoubtedly chaotic, both of Obama's successors emphasised domestic public fatigue towards US wars in the Middle East and surrounding region. Therefore, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome has become a consideration amongst both main political parties.

Chapter five examined Obama's Jeffersonian smart power strategy that combined hard power instruments of economic sanctions and military intervention, with soft power tools of diplomacy and persuasion. It discusses how Obama used smart power to factor the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome into his foreign policymaking when pursuing his preferable diplomatic solutions, and his approach to his military interventions in Libya and Syria.

The first section analysed how Obama's smart power strategy helped develop a more disciplined Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint that considered domestic public opinion. It helped kill bin Laden and weaken Islamic extremism to create more political space for America to exercise soft power in the MENA and Southeast Asia regions, and achieve negotiating the Iran nuclear deal. The chapter dissected that he did this through Jeffersonian pragmatism that focused on the results-oriented approach by avoiding being digressed by Wilsonian ideals as Carter's rhetorically more proactive human rights and democracy promotion agenda to agree the deal. It distinguished Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism from Henry Kissinger's and his realpolitik that was unideological, and predominantly concerned with interest-based foreign policy and outcomes regardless of the means. However, Obama's Jeffersonian pragmatism through his smart power strategy, considered how to methodically attain promoting US ideals abroad. This was through using hard power economic sanctions against Iran, and even the threat of military action to destroy its nuclear programme. Moreover, Obama successfully persuaded traditional US adversaries Russia to join in international sanctions to pressure Iran after a New START deal was agreed, which also brought China's support. Concurrently, Obama used soft power persuasive tactics by offering sanctions relief, and greater engagement with global markets for its oil to agree the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It therefore also avoided miliary confrontation in the MENA that the sensitive attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome had little appetite for.

The chapter then analysed how Obama conducted his first major military intervention in Libya in 2011 as a Jeffersonian by heavily considering its domestic political implications, particularly the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This again partly demonstrated Obama's smart power strategy towards using military intervention by building a large international coalition comprised of NATO, local actors from the Arab League, with a United Nations mandate that invoked the

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Responsibility to Protect to burden-share. Furthermore, Obama's Jeffersonian approach was also reflected in the Libya intervention through his consideration of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. This was by trying to balance interests in the conflict by limiting US burdens, whilst committing to the perceived role of being an indispensable nation by upholding ideals of democracy promotion and liberty. "It minimised the costs and risks to American life, by concentrating efforts on the lofty heights of exceptionalist rhetoric and American airpower" (Holland, 2013). Therefore, aspects of the American public, including the section that represents the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, tolerated the approach to the intervention.

Nevertheless, Obama experienced relatively familiar problems to the Iraq War for the American military, in which the local population did not know how to politically reconstruct its own country, after the dictator Muammar Gaddafi was removed. Furthermore, the international coalition that included long-term allies, Britain, and France, of which their respective leaders told Obama that they would take responsibility for this task, quickly disintegrated. Ivo Daalder, Obama's Ambassador to NATO during the conflict on reflection, said that "the lesson that I'm learning on, and I've changed my view over the course of this of the last twenty years, is that actually, I don't think that the international community has the resources, stamina, and political will that it takes for that kind of long-term engagement that you need" (2017). The Libya intervention therefore reflected that a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach towards military intervention can produce a cost-effective operation that caters to the domestic attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome. However, it remains challenging to persuade allies bear more burden-sharing, even when the future of the political stability of the region will affect them more than America.

Finally, the chapter reassessed Obama's approach to the Syrian Civil War and not acting on his own 'red line' to eventually decide not to intervene in 2013. This was after the amplified attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome heavily factored into his decision-making, when a military intervention came onto the agenda, and crucially, the fear of entering a similar quagmire to the Iraq War. Obama originally took a Jeffersonian position on the conflict and did not regard it to be in the direct national interest to change strategic course of reducing military presence in the MENA region. However, he warned that if the Syrian dictator, Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons, it would force America to militarily intervene with allies. When these very atrocities were committed against Syrian civilians, Obama's own words put pressure on him to act after the conditions that he set out that would force him to had largely been met. Nevertheless, his Jeffersonian instincts remained wary of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and a lack of public appetite for new conflict in the MENA.

The chapter further investigated Obama's red line and argued that his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach. It argues that his considerations of the domestic implications of military intervention in Syria, especially provoking the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome brings a better understanding to his changing of positions that originally supported intervention to then approaching the crisis diplomatically. This is because there was indeed some consistency shown by Obama through his preference to keeping to a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of restraint. He had no intention of becoming digressed by Wilsonian idealism and risking another protracted Middle Eastern war because of justified moral outrage. Therefore, whilst Obama certainly did not manage the Syria crisis and US policy response very well, and critical views may point to inconsistency by intervening in Libya, but not Syria, the detail shows that he was broadly consistent in having a Jeffersonian foreign policy approach.

Obama set out similar conditions to intervening in Syria as he did for Libya, whereby he wanted US allies to be part of any potential military action, but naively, he readily assumed that they would join. As Mead noted, a Jeffersonian foreign policy of restraint can is challenging to implement because "the prospect of a lower American profile may make others less, rather than more, willing to help the United States" (2010:p.63). This was demonstrated during the Syria crisis when the British Parliament unexpectedly voted against military intervention, with the memory of its own role in the Iraq War heavily hanging on its general public and politicians. Consequently, Obama found himself rhetorically committing to military action without the conditions he said he would do so, in a state that he publicly said had no direct national interest to the United States. "So disastrous was the Iraq War, so costly and unforced an error, that in retrospect it seems the hinge of the entire post-Cold War era, the moment when American hegemony switched from successful to problematic, welcomed to resisted" (Rose, 2024). The prospect of largely entering a new military intervention in the MENA alone, with limited support from France, was unacceptable to the American public and the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, which Congress also vocalised. "For the Obama administration, the costs remained high and unacceptable. US public opinion showed little support for intervention. There was no clear exit strategy, not clear objectives beyond signalling resolve through a strike" (Fitzgerald & Ryan, 2014:p.127). This showed the hallmarks of a conflict that could not satisfy any of the key criteria and concerns that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome express to justify military intervention. Obama did achieve his preferred option of destroying Assad's chemical weapons diplomatically with cooperation from Russia and the United Nations. Therefore, as a Jeffersonian, "Obama was remarkably consistent throughout his tenure that if direct American national interests and security were not threatened, he would not adopt the critical error of his predecessor and commit American military force. It reflected in Obama's efforts to delineate between the necessity

for military intervention against ISIS and the impracticality of direct intervention against the Assad regime" (Clarke & Ricketts, 2017). This allowed him to continue his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach that considered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome by reducing America's military presence in the MENA instead of becoming drawn back into geopolitical crises outside direct US interests and consequently:

Obama did manage to reduce drastically the number of American boots on the ground and budget dollars spent. US troop numbers in Iraq peaked at around 166,000 during George W. Bush's 'surge' in late 2007. Now there are about 5,000 there to fight ISIS, whose rise was a result of the Sunni political/military vacuum left behind by Bush's benighted invasion and occupation policies…The peak in Afghanistan was around 100,000 US troops, reached at the height of Obama's own flawed surge-and-withdraw strategy in 2010. Now there are only about 10,000 (Unger, 2016:p.5).

Additionally, Obama brought questions about the efficacy of military intervention to promote US ideals, and the concerns of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome more into the centre of debate on US foreign policy and American exceptionalism, at least more successfully than Carter. However, the Syria crisis showed the limits of his Jeffersonian smart power strategy when he could not build the political conditions and support to implement its hard power element.

Unique Contributions

This thesis has contributed to the literature studying the role domestic public opinion on the foreign relations of the United States. This has been done by uniquely revising the understanding of the attitudes known as the Vietnam Syndrome and its influence on US foreign policy and debates about American exceptionalism and military intervention. Rather than being regarded as a sign of a national illness, or 'syndrome', amongst the American public, it should be interpreted as a signal for greater self-examination about how the US promotes its ideals and the role of military intervention to do so. Therefore these attitudes are an important part of the debate and subject of American exceptionalism. Furthermore, the research identified key connections between the wars Vietnam and Iraq that brought the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and domestic public opinion more into US foreign policymaking. Neoconservatives largely emerged out of opposition to public caution towards military intervention and instead they advocated for readily using military intervention to promote US ideals and maximise its power. However, the failures of the Iraq War brought deeper self-examination amongst the general public and policymakers. Subsequently, the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome became an important part of the debate about American exceptionalism, and how the United States could use military intervention, if at all, to most effectively promote its ideals abroad, which Obama resonated with. This contrasted from the attitudes being regarded as

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oppositional to these foreign policy goals, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Additionally the research highlighted that the failure of the Iraq War began to open the political space for the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome to become legitimised. Therefore, Obama's sensitivity towards them began to move US foreign policy debate beyond the binary framework of being internationalist or isolationist. Obama was able to give more consideration to the efficacy of military intervention for promoting US ideals to live up to being a moral global leader and exceptional nation.

A key contribution to the existing academic literature about Obama's foreign policy approach is its exploration of his complex view of American exceptionalism. As the thesis has discussed, Obama has been analysed as a president that embraced American decline rather than American exceptionalism through his restraint and acknowledgement that as powerful as the United States is, it has its limits to solving geopolitical problems. However, Obama rejected decline through his belief that America can and will become a better example and global leader. The fact that Obama titled his autobiography, 'A Promised Land' (2020) is telling about his view of America and what it can achieve, what he believes it will achieve. The scholar Walter McDougall named his book on American exceptionalism, 'Promised Land, Crusader State' (1997), that analysed the former as the exemplar school.

However, Obama also rejected the traditional ideological beliefs within American exceptionalism that American power only has an upward trajectory that will never decline, as Hilde Restad outlined (2014). Instead Obama emphasised that America's history is nonlinear, and the success of living up to the ideals it promotes and how it practices has ebbed and flowed, or zigged and zagged. Obama articulated this in his farewell address, stating, "so that's what we mean when we say America is exceptional—not that our nation has been flawless from the start, but that we have shown the capacity to change and make life better for those who follow. Yes, our progress has been uneven. The work of democracy has always been hard…But the long sweep of America has been defined by forward motion, a constant widening of our founding creed to embrace all and not just some" (2017). He therefore believed that America would be successful in promoting its ideals at home and abroad to ultimately play a positive role as a global leader. Furthermore, he believed that the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome amongst domestic public opinion had an important part to getting there.

The theoretical framework of Walter Russell Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions was an original approach to discussing the effect of the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome on decision-making towards military intervention. The theory helped improve the understanding of the culturally and historically rooted different worldviews amongst domestic groups within the American public

and policymakers and their respective schools of thought to promoting US ideals. The attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome are a significant part in the longstanding debate of establishing the role of military intervention to achieve in promoting the ideals of liberal democracy and freedom in America's foreign policy approach. This is not to say that the American public, or even policymakers that engage more in discussions regarding American exceptionalism and America's global role are often consciously thinking about these traditions in foreign policymaking.

Nonetheless, Mead's US Foreign Policy Traditions serves as an important theory that integrates historical political ideas about a specific nation to show how they have shaped its ideational perception of itself and guided its actions in international relations. It highlights the exceptionality, so to speak, of the United States and its foreign policy approach and the ideas that have come out of these traditions have partially influenced US public opinion and policymakers. Consequently, the theory helps build a better understanding of historical patterns can emerge through the theory to identify how the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome are part of a longer ideological debate about American exceptionalism and how America should promote its ideals. Moreover, it helps understand how the attitudes have further developed this debate by the American public beginning to have a larger role that encouraged greater introspection post-Vietnam War, to eventually beginning to more tangibly influence US foreign policymaking towards restraint after the failures of the Iraq War.

In relation to the relevance of Mead's traditions and how presidents have responded to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, these circumspect views are not uniquely Jeffersonian. It is true that the Jeffersonian tradition does believe that it is "better to perfect democracy at home than risk it in the hurly-burly of foreign relations" (Brands, 2002). Furthermore, critical analysis calls Jeffersonians isolationist, whereby they "put the domestic interest so far ahead of the international interest as to convey the frequent impression of indifference, even hostility, to the world beyond American shores" (Ibid). As the thesis has discussed the two presidents, Carter and Obama that primarily considered the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome post-Vietnam War and post-Iraq invasion were Jeffersonians, which could indicate that they are more of a concern to this school of thought. However, all four foreign policy traditions can be responsive to the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome, even in the effort to conduct a more interventionist foreign policy approach by trying to make it palatable.

Finally, this research has contributed to a growing need to further improve the understanding of US foreign policy restraint. "One of the most telling facts about the decision to go to war in Iraq is the lack of any meeting where such a decision was made. At no time did the

administration force itself to officially state the war's objectives and the strategy for achieving them" (Rose, 2024). The research highlighted how the Iraq War therefore specifically provoked the attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome and how Obama in contrast, learnt from its failures through considering its demands in his Jeffersonian foreign policy approach. Consequently, Obama gave more consideration to domestic public opinion and its role in the debate about the use and objectives of military intervention to promote US ideals with more thought on its efficacy to achieve this. This was reflected by his decision to have a limited role in the Libya intervention, and ultimately deciding against intervening in Syria without sufficient domestic or international support, believing that such action would do little to remove Assad or bring democratic reform.

Therefore, the Iraq War's military, and more significantly, political failures through its lack of transparency, largely caused successive US administrations to have a "a trust deficit which they will still have to address fully: it includes rebuilding trust in government domestically; increasing their populations' resilience to disinformation; rebuilding trust internationally; and reforming and strengthening the international order" (Messmer, 2023). Since Obama's presidency, Donald Trump exploited this distrust amongst Americans by not only rejecting America's international role as a global leader as president through his broadly Jacksonian and interest-based 'America First' nationalistic foreign policy approach of restraint, but also his refusal to accept his 2020 election defeat. President Joe Biden also demonstrated his appreciation for the increasing interconnectedness between domestic and international politics in his first major foreign policy speech as president, saying that "there's no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy. Every action we take in our conduct abroad, we must take with American working families in mind" (2021). He largely continued this trend of American restraint by reintroducing a more Jeffersonian foreign policy approach of trying to improve domestic public trust. The attitudes of the Vietnam Syndrome have therefore had a significant role in debates about American exceptionalism and policymaking towards military intervention, especially since the Iraq War, that continues to this day.

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