



Universiteit Utrecht

# Imperialism Versus Realism

A Realist Perspective on Clinton's Policy Towards Iraq

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## Abstract:

Terms such as empire and imperialism are widely used terms to define foreign policy. In the current era, the United States has often been the focus of both public as academic debates in regards to its supposed imperialist foreign policy and its 'modern empire.' These terms however carry highly polemic connotations and it has to be questioned whether or not they do justice to the reality of foreign policy. Whereas terms such as empire and imperialism have often been applied to the United States as a whole, foreign policy has to be analysed within its own right. These issues become clear when looking at the academic debate after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. With George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq, much of the academic literature has focused on the contemporary American empire and how it has become an 'empire by design.' The conflict with Iraq however did not start with the invasion of Iraq and policy towards Iraq should thus also not be seen as a singular whole. Differences between administrations matter. This paper will thus look at the foreign policy under Bill Clinton as the president who preceded Bush, to question whether or not his foreign policy towards Iraq should be seen in the light of U.S. imperialism, or as a rational response to the threat that Iraq posed to the security of the United States.

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## Introduction

“‘Empire’ is a powerful and a dangerous word. It has a rich and ambiguous history. It has strong polemical connotations now as in the past.”<sup>1</sup> As rightly observed by Dominic Lieven, the term ‘empire’ and as a result ‘imperialism’ as defined as ‘the exertion of sovereignty, control, and influence by one state or society over another’,<sup>2</sup> is often seen as a highly controversial denominator in our modern world. Questions on whether modern nations should be seen as ‘empires’ often spark highly contentious debates both in popular news mediums as in academic circles. But no nation has sparked as large a debate on this topic in the modern day as the United States has.

Despite its relatively short history, the United States has arguably played one of the largest, if not the largest, role in shaping our modern era. Due to its prominent role in global politics it has received both praise as criticism for its intervention in conflicts around the world. Ranging from small conflicts to large ones, the United States has left its footprint on many of the conflicts in the modern age. Where however some might see its actions as preserving the peace and insuring human rights in a world filled with conflict, others might see it as the United States’ attempt to increase its influence around the world. As a result, its interventionism and foreign policy has often been criticised as modern-day imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

The question on whether or not the U.S interventionism and foreign policy should be seen as modern-day imperialism is an old and on-going debate within academic circles. Some claim that it started with the 1898 Spanish-American war, while others believe the origin can be found as early as the founding of the U.S.<sup>4</sup> One of the most recent conflicts that has restarted this debate has been the invasion of Iraq in 2003. With George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq in 2003, the dominant view seems to have become that the U.S. is in fact an empire and is an “empire by design.”<sup>5</sup> ‘Proponents of the ‘empire by design’ argument see U.S. foreign policy as “the purposeful expansion by the U.S. into imperial relationships with other subordinate states, for a range of motives, usually economic and

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<sup>1</sup> Dominic C. B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001): 413.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Kettel and Alex Sutton, "New Imperialism: Toward a Holistic Approach," *International Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2013): 244.

<sup>3</sup> For more on imperialism under the guise of humanitarian intervention see for instance Ray Bush, Giuliano Martiniello, and Claire Mercer, "Humanitarian Imperialism," *Review of African Political Economy* 38, no. 129 (2011): 357-65.

<sup>4</sup> For recent works on this see for instance: Stephen Kinzer, *The True Flag: Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, and the Birth of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2017) or A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Seminal works in this debate include: Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); C. Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*, (London, Verso, 2004); Mann, Michael. *Incoherent Empire*. London, Verso 2003); and Bacevich, A. *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002.

political.”<sup>6</sup> ‘Imperial’ control is thus directly pursued to exploit another state for its own national interests. Hunt for instance argues that in Latin America, East Asia and Europe the U.S. created ‘colonial administrations’, favourable to the U.S, and pursued informal control through economic aid programs, military assistance and diplomatic pressure, all done in order to create an empire and make foreign regions responsive to its wishes.<sup>7</sup> Johnson on the other hand proposes that the ‘American empire’ is not an empire of colonial territories but rather an ‘empire of bases’.<sup>8</sup> The U.S projects its power overseas not by establishing colonial governments but by establishing military bases around the world and continues to do so despite having no rival after the fall of the Soviet Union. This argument is of course called into question after the emergence of China as a potential rival of the U.S. What however most of the writers on the American empire seem to do is write about the U.S. from a singular perspective.

As Dan O’Meary then also rightly points out: “Once the U.S. is defined as imperialist, everything it does is by definition, imperialist.”<sup>9</sup> This however does not do justice to the reality of foreign policy. With ‘empire by design’ proponents giving the illusion of a singular and goal-driven policy towards empire, U.S. foreign policy becomes seen as a single whole. But differences between U.S. administrations matter profoundly and foreign policy should be analysed within its own right. The debate on U.S. imperialism on the other hand seems to be focused on structure rather than agency.<sup>10</sup> As O’Meary however also acknowledges, agency is crucial to any notion of interests,<sup>11</sup> in this particular case, national interests. This paper will emphasize the importance agency within these types of debate by looking at individual policy to show that it is too simple to see foreign policy as a single whole. While Dan O’Meary has done something similar, his article focussed on the anti-imperialist sentiment among U.S. citizens. This paper on the other hand will add to this that specific foreign policy can be understood as rational responses to perceived threats instead of imperialist policy. This paper will thus question the validity of many of the ‘empire by design’ arguments by testing it on a case study, Bill J. Clinton’s foreign policy towards Iraq.

As the war that restarted the debate on U.S. imperialism, Iraq has been given special attention in many of the works produced on this debate.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. conflict with Iraq however did not

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<sup>6</sup> Desmond King, "When an Empire Is Not an Empire: The US Case," *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 2 (2006): 169-170.

<sup>7</sup> Hunt, *The American Ascendancy*, 309.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Dan, O’Meary, "'American Empire' and 'US Imperialism' after the War in Iraq?: The American State in the Contemporary Global Order," *Labour, Capital and Society* 39, no. 1 (2006): 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Articles which particularly look at U.S. imperialism in the context of Iraq are for instance Frederic F. Clairmont, "Iraq: The Nemesis of Imperialism," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 29 (2005): 3124-127; or George Leaman, "Iraq, American Empire, and the War on Terrorism," *Metaphilosophy* 35, no. 3 (2004):234-48.

start in 2003 but has a long history before this. When debating the supposed long-term intentional imperialist agenda of the U.S. towards Iraq then, it is of value to look at the foreign policy before the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In particular, by looking at Bill Clinton's, foreign policy towards Iraq as the president who preceded George W. Bush, these differences become clearer. As attention to this has been minimal within the empire debate however,<sup>13</sup> this paper will thus question "whether or not Clinton's policy towards Iraq should be seen in the light of supposed U.S. imperialist intentionalism or as a rational response to a perceived threat?"

This paper will be written from a realist perspective on international relations, in particular neoclassical realism. Realism is often used within international relations to explain both the behaviour of states as the international system as a whole. The school of thought encompasses a variety of different approaches but the three key trends can be seen as: classical realism, most notably advocated by Henry Morgenthau, neorealism, represented by Kenneth Waltz, and neoclassical realism, initially coined by Gideon Rose.<sup>14</sup> All three strands of realism share the view that sovereign, self-serving states are the primary actors within the international system. Whereas Morgenthau however saw the primary factor behind state behaviour as human nature and the pursuit of power, Waltz saw it differently and advocated for a realist view where the structure, or rather anarchy, of the international system and security lie at the basis of state behaviour. Neoclassicism on the other hand criticises neorealism for its heavy-handed focus on structures and emphasizes that while states do in fact react to threats within the international system structure, agency within state behaviour does matter.<sup>15</sup> Variables like irrational judgements of leadership, wrong signals from the international system and domestic pressure can influence foreign policy as well. In addition, while neoclassicism criticises the exclusive focus on structural aspect of neorealism, it does agree with Waltz's defensive realism which places security instead of power as the primary aim of states. While structural threats thus continue to play the dominant role in shaping state

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<sup>13</sup> Desmond King for instance briefly touches upon Clinton's interventions in Somalia and Kosovo when referring to the U.S. its reluctant use of force: King, Desmond. "When an Empire Is Not an Empire: The US Case." *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 2 (2006): 187; Michael Cox in "Empire, Imperialism and the Bush Doctrine" does mention Clinton's lack of a "grand strategy" when referring to the U.S. its position in the world however only contrasts this with the vision of the "New imperialists" of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Michael Cox, "Empire, Imperialism and the Bush Doctrine", *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 4 (2004): 596.

<sup>14</sup> For Morgenthau's realism see: Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946); for Waltz's neorealism see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1979); and for Rose's neoclassical realism see Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144-72.

<sup>15</sup> Norrin M. Ripsman, "Neoclassical Realism," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, (December 21, 2017); Accessed June 13, 2021,

<https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-36>.

behaviour, these structural threats themselves must be interpreted and acted on by agents.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned before, this paper will hold a neoclassical realist perspective as it can best critically engage the main research question. It firstly acknowledges that besides structures, agency influences foreign policy, but more importantly, it follows Waltz' in adopting defensive realism. Security rather than power being the primary aim of states calls into question the use of the term imperialism.

The term 'imperialism' is ambiguous within defensive realist theory. As defensive realism argues that security is the primary factor behind international relations, it implies that there is nothing that would stop a nation from dominating all potential rivals and control as much territory it can in order to 'secure' its interests, in other words world domination.<sup>17</sup> Theoretically speaking, a nation would be able pursue security to this extreme without having any 'imperialist' intentions. So where should the line be drawn between pursuing security and imperialism in our modern international system? Definitions of imperialism are usually focussed on the use of power by states to pursue economic objectives. For instance, Lenin originally defined it as, "the use of state power to pursue economic objectives beyond state frontiers."<sup>18</sup> Later in 1914, H.N. Brailsforth described it as, the "constant acquisition of economic opportunity by political pressure."<sup>19</sup> Definitions of imperialism within defensive realism seem to follow a similar line of reasoning however are more centred on the concept of security than on the concept of acquisition. As Campbell Craig for instance puts it: "We can say that a nation may be acting imperially when it continues to project its power overseas even when it has attained security from the predation of other nations. We can say that a nation is definitely acting imperially when, in engaging in this projection of power, it undertakes policies that actually reduce its security."<sup>20</sup> While this definition of Campbell Craig gives a good understanding of imperialism within defensive realist theories, the focus on 'predation of nations' seems too narrow. As he later confirms in his own article, the basic role of governments within realist theory is to protect the security of its citizens.<sup>21</sup> The well-being of humans is however not only threatened by 'predation of nations' but can be affected by numerous other external threats. This paper will thus hold a slightly different, self-defined definition of imperialism within realist theory, namely: "We can say that a nation may be acting imperially when it continues to project its power abroad even when there is no threat to its security, be it militarily, politically, economically or culturally. We can say that a nation is definitely acting imperially when, in engaging in this projection of power, it undertakes policies that actually reduce its security."

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Craig Campbell, "American Realism versus American Imperialism," *World Politics* 57, no. 1 (2004): 160

<sup>18</sup> Norman Etherton, "Reconsidering Theories of Imperialism," *History and Theory* 21, no. 1 (1982): 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 160-161.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, "American Realism," 169.

This paper will thus look at both the historical context in which Clinton's foreign policy was created as Clinton's foreign policy itself through a neoclassical realist perspective, considering both the supposed structural threat Iraq posed, as the decision made by Clinton in response. Was Iraq truly a threat to U.S. security interests at the time? Were the policies created in response to this perceived threat actually intended to secure, rather than advance U.S. interests? These questions will be at the centre of this paper.

The paper will give an overview of Clinton's overall policy towards Iraq however will focus primarily on one episode within Clinton's foreign policy where a projection of power was most evident, Operation Desert Fox. Operation Desert Fox was the four-day bombing of Iraqi targets in order to directly control Iraqi policy and will thus provide a proper framework to see whether or not the action was taken to secure U.S. interests or advance them. To answer the main research question three sub-questions should be answered first. Firstly, this paper will question what U.S. interests were in Iraq to understand whether or not Iraq could pose a viable threat to U.S. security. Following this, the paper will look at Clinton's policy as a whole to question in which broader context Operation Desert Fox was executed. Lastly, through a discourse analysis of primary sources, this paper will question whether or not certain imperialist intentions towards Iraq before and after Operation Desert Fox can be identified.

The primary sources are a collection of declassified documents from the Clinton administration regarding Operation Desert Fox. The collection of documents consists of communiques between Bill Clinton, Clinton's senior staff, and other world leaders from before and after Operation Desert Fox. As Operation Desert Fox, was a joint military intervention with the United Kingdom to directly influence Iraqi policy, direct, previously classified, correspondence on the operation can give insights on the motivations behind this 'show of power'. Should it be seen as a response towards a viable threat or as a projection of power without a viable security threat? As they are communiques with other world leaders however, certain thoughts and actions will naturally be hidden or concealed. Of course no 'illegitimate' motivations would ever be admitted to in a diplomatic setting with other world leaders. The 'true' motivations behind foreign policy decisions, insofar they exist, will, unless they are directly admitted to, never be uncovered. What these communiques do show however is the manner in which Clinton justified his decision to other world leaders which in turn lets us question whether or not this falls in realm of '*realpolitik*' or not, whether or not Operation Desert Fox was a rational response to a perceived external threat or not. A second limitation is the redaction of certain sentences within the collection. Seeing as they are declassified governmental documents, this is often done in order to protect certain information from being revealed, usually pertaining to personal views or personal information. In the collection of documents this paper focusses on, the redaction is mainly used for preparatory documents and is

only minimally used for the direct correspondence. Where redaction is used in the direct correspondences is mainly where it seems that personal information or views would be revealed. While this is thus a slight limitation of the sources, it will not directly impact the analysis this paper aims to do. Despite these limitations then, the analysis will still be able to give insight in both how Clinton justified his decision to other world leaders and how he himself might have perceived Iraq at the time, a security threat or something else.

## Chapter 1: Oil and Weapons: U.S. interests in Iraq

To understand foreign policy decisions, it is important to know the context in which these decisions have been made. As argued before, foreign policy should only be considered imperial if it is a projection of power abroad without a viable threat to a nation's security. Influencing other nations through economic, military or other threats to secure the national security of one's nation lies at the basis of international relations. It is for this reason that to question whether or not Clinton's policy towards Iraq should be seen in the light of supposed imperialism, we have to understand whether or not Iraq posed a viable threat to U.S. security or not. As will be further explained below, there seemed to be two primary security concerns for the U.S. regarding Iraq. Destabilisation of the oil market and growing concerns over Iraqi weaponry following the 1991 Gulf war.

### 1.1: Securing the Oil Market

After the Invasion of Iraq and continuing to this day, a common criticism has been that the initial motive for the Invasion of Iraq had been to secure Middle-Eastern oil for the United States. A worldwide poll taken on March 16, 2004, results showed that a majority in Muslim countries saw this to be the case. In Jordan 71%, Turkey 64%, Morocco 63% and in Pakistan 54%. But also in European countries, especially in those who didn't support the war, a majority of participants shared this view, Germany 60% and France 58%.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, the significance of Persian Gulf oil cannot be understood and dominated foreign policy towards the Middle-East long before the outbreak of the Iraqi war of 2003. By the end of the 1960s, Persian Gulf oil had become the world's largest reserve of oil in the world and the United States itself, despite having oil reserves of their own, had become a 'relatively' modest importer of oil.<sup>23</sup> By the 1970s, the U.S. had grown to become a substantial importer and was projected to only continue to grow. While concerns over oil import dependency had been growing before 1973 due to instability in the Middle East and Southern-America, with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war these concerns became certain reality.<sup>24</sup> As Israeli forces began gaining the upper hand on Egypt, a separate group within OPEC, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, OAPEC, began using its oil to pressure Israeli allies. With a production cut of

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<sup>22</sup> Pew Research Center, "Survey Report: U.S. Image Still Poor," *Pew Research Center* (March 16, 2004); Accessed on June 5, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2004/03/16/survey-report/>.

<sup>23</sup> Nick Ritchie and Paul Rogers, *The Political Road to War with Iraq: Bush, 9/11 and the Drive to Overthrow Saddam* (London: Routledge, 2006): 9.

<sup>24</sup> David S. Painter, "Oil and the American Century." *The Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (2012): 33-34.

15%, an increased price of around 70%, and an embargo of oil exports to the U.S., OAPEC had essentially 'weaponised' its oil reserves.<sup>25</sup> As a result, oil prices skyrocketed and U.S. concerns of inflation and economic stagnation were realized. For the US this was a clear sign that despite close links with Middle-Eastern oil producers, when challenged, they would not shy away from using oil as a political weapon, a clear threat to U.S. national and economic security.<sup>26</sup>

In response to this threat and concerns about regional stability, president Jimmy Carter established in 1980 the JRDTF, the Joint Rapid Deployment Task Force. With the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's 1981 statement that were Persian Gulf oil cut off altogether, the Western economic and military capabilities could be gravely weakened within months, the JRDTF was expanded under president Reagan and transformed into a new military command, CENTCOM.<sup>27</sup> CENTCOM had come to carry the responsibility of ensuring U.S. and its allies' interests within the Middle-East, preferably through diplomatic leverage but militarily if needed.<sup>28</sup>

U.S. economic concerns about the Persian Gulf were once again realised with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. With this two-day long invasion, Iraq not only obtained almost one-fifth of the world's oil reserves, but also threatened Saudi supply.<sup>29</sup> While markets quickly acted to mitigate the damage, oil prices still quickly tripled and caused inflation in many of the oil importing countries, mainly western nations. As the U.S. was already struggling with a weakening economy, the shock that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait brought to the oil market tipped it over the scale towards a recession.<sup>30</sup>

It was however not only the U.S. that was hit by the successive oil crises caused by Middle-Eastern instability. As the world leading oil producers, countries from the Persian Gulf were of vital interest to many nations who relied on oil imports for their energy supply. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait thus not only necessitated U.S. intervention but additionally sparked heavy international criticism and intervention. Over a four month period in 1990, from August to November, the United Nations Security Council passed 12 resolution to mediate the Iraqi-Kuwait conflict. When negotiations however seemed futile, resolution 678 was passed with 12 votes for, 2 votes against and 1 abstaining. The resolution specified that were Iraq to fail in implementing the previous 12 resolutions before the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1991, "the member states cooperating with Kuwait's legitimate government would be authorized to use "all necessary means" to compel Iraq to do so and restore

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<sup>25</sup> Ritchie, *The Political Road to war with Iraq*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth F. McKenzie, *Posture Statement on United States Central Command*. Senate Armed Services Committee, 22 April 2021; Accessed on June 6, 2021, <https://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/POSTURE-STATEMENT/>.

<sup>29</sup> Robert J. Lieber, "Oil and Power after the Gulf War," *International Security* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer, 1992): 156.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

international peace and security in the area.”<sup>31</sup> With this, the U.S. and allied nations had gained an international mandate for military intervention.

The structural threat Iraq posed to the security of the U.S. economy had a large impact on shaping foreign policy towards Iraq. Additionally, while Operation Desert Storm, the official title for the eviction of Iraqi rule in Kuwait, is often seen as an U.S.-Iraqi conflict, the participation of France, the United Kingdom, Egypt, Syria and Saudi-Arabia and the official mandate given by the United Nations show that Iraq posed a threat to a large part of the international community.

## 1.2 Concerns over Iraqi Weaponry

Where oil can be seen as a long term strategy that informed much of the foreign policy towards Iraq after the 1970s, Iraq’s possession of both long range missiles, ‘Scuds’, and chemical and biological weaponry, ‘WMD’s’, became of increasing concerns after the 1991 Gulf war. While Iraq was seen as having a relatively strong military force in the region around 1988, its forces were far less well equipped than those of the United States and its allies in the region as was also proven during the Gulf war in 1991 where Iraq was beaten back within six weeks.<sup>32</sup> The possible capabilities that Iraq showed during the Gulf war however affected future U.S. military planning as it brought concerns over Iraq’s military potential after it survived the war which consequently brought concerns over regional stability.

As the war took off, the sheer difference between Iraq’s military technology and that of the coalition forces seemed to be immense. After the first night of the war it seemed that the war could end relatively quickly. A week of airstrikes on relevant military targets, followed by a ground invasion, could see Iraqi forces evicted from Kuwait within two weeks.<sup>33</sup> As the war progressed however, Iraq’s possession of Scud missiles and long range ballistic weaponry such as the Al-Hussein missile proved to have a considerable effect on the war. With Iraq attacking Israeli cities with long-range missiles, possible Israeli retaliation became a large concern for the coalition forces. As the coalition consisted of several Arab nations, the entry of Israel in the war would have likely led to the withdrawal of several coalition members.<sup>34</sup> In response, considerable military resources were devoted to defending Israeli airspace and targeting possible launch sites for long-range missiles. As a result, attention was

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<sup>31</sup> Peace and Security Section of the Department of Public Information, “Iraq/Kuwait – UNIKOM – Background,” *Peacekeeping UN* (2003); Accessed on June 8, 2021, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unikom/background.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Ritchie, *The Political Road to war with Iraq*, 15.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

diverted from several key strategic targets and the war was substantially drawn out.<sup>35</sup> What this showed to the US, was that despite having relatively weak weapons capabilities, the existence of long-range ballistic missiles could severely constrain U.S. and its allies' operations in regional conflicts and threaten U.S allies in the region.

Besides concerns over long-range missiles, concerns over chemical and biological weapons would come to have arguably the largest impact on U.S. policy towards Iraq following the 1991 Gulf war. There had been suspicions of Iraq developing biological and chemical weapons as early as 1988 and with the U.S. leading the coalition forces against Iraq, possible chemical or biological retaliation became one of the most serious concerns in the Gulf war.<sup>36</sup> While precautions were made such as the developing of 150.000 antitoxin vaccines and protective clothing,<sup>37</sup> the main objective became deterrence of use. With a letter addressed to Saddam Hussein, George H.W. Bush made it clear that any use of chemical or biological weaponry would demand the strongest possible response from the U.S.<sup>38</sup> While the letter was not accepted for transmission, according the Secretary of State James Baker, he personally "left the impression during the meeting that use of chemical or biological agents by Iraq could invite a tactical nuclear response."<sup>39</sup> Through military threat the U.S. was able to deter the use of chemical and biological weaponry in the 1991 Gulf war. While however these weapons were not used, they would continue to be developed during and after the war and were instead used by Iraq as a deterrent against regime termination. Consequently, security concerns about Iraq's WMD potential remained throughout the 1990s.<sup>40</sup>

The two concerns, long-range ballistic capabilities and Iraq's WMD potential had a substantial effect on U.S. military and security thinking in the 1990s. The constraining effect on U.S. strategic movements and the threat to Persian Gulf stability that Iraq's weapon capabilities posed brought serious concerns to U.S. security interests. In addition, Iraq's increasingly militaristic stance in the 1980s and 1990s, combined with growing weapons capabilities could prove to become a real threat to U.S. allies within the region, most notably Israel and Saudi-Arabia. Similar to the stability of the oil market, this concern was not exclusive to the U.S. Seemingly united, these concerns led to the adoption of resolution 687 within the UN Security Council being accepted with only one vote against and two nations abstaining. Affirming previously adopted resolutions, resolution 687 also forced Iraq to remove and destroy all its chemical and biological weaponry and its long-range ballistic missiles

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>36</sup> Jean E. Krasno and James S. Sutterlin, *The United Nations and Iraq: Defanging the Viper* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003): 3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> James A. Baker and Thomas M. DeFrank, *The politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995): 359.

<sup>40</sup> Krasno, *The United nations and Iraq* , 4.

with a range greater than 150 kilometres. In addition, it established a separate commission that would come to oversee the implementation of the resolution, UNSCOM. As argued by Mark Phyllian, "It came to represent a new departure in arms control."<sup>41</sup> As the first 'modern' example of arms control, resolution 687 and UNSCOM can be seen as a coercive rather than cooperative disarmament.<sup>42</sup> What this change thus also seems to suggest is that the importance placed on Iraq's disarmament was certainly not exclusive to the U.S. By implementing resolution 687, the Security Council showed that it was united in acting against the threat Iraq posed at the time. Iraq's weaponry was seen as a real security threat, not only to the U.S. but to the other nations of the Security Council as well.

### 1.3 Conclusion

It is essential to see that Persian Gulf security as a vital issue informing most of U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle-East and specifically Iraq. As arguably the most important geopolitical region in the world in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, stability within the Persian Gulf was vital to ensuring U.S. security interests. Instability in the Persian Gulf could severely affect both economic security in the form of inflation and possible economic recession, as political security, in the form of danger to U.S. allies within the region such as Israel and Saudi-Arabia. With growing concerns over Iraqi regime and its destabilizing actions within the region, it seems that no matter who would come to reside in the White House, they were bound to become entangled with the question of how to secure U.S. interests from Iraq.

As seen, intervention in Iraqi policy to ensure regional stability by the U.S. be it militarily, economically or through diplomatic leverage can in fact be seen as basic international politics within a realist perspective as the posed a structural threat to the security of the U.S.. As mentioned before however, Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003 is often seen as inexplicable within realist theory. According to Craig Campbell this was because the U.S. here showed a clear willingness to pursue goals well beyond that of national security and showed no regard about alienating large, allied nations like France and Canada.<sup>43</sup> The protracted, expensive war would arguably only bring more instability to the region and by alienating allies would endanger its own political security within the international system. Where intervention and the projection of power in Iraq then might be seen as a rational response within realist theory, a disproportionate response of policy such as the invasion of 2003

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<sup>41</sup> Mark Phyllian, "UNSCOM in the Time of Cholera: The Continuing Lessons and Arms Control Implications of the UNSCOM Experience," *World Affairs* 163, no. 2 (2000): 51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Campbell, "American Realism," 145.

where it can be argued that it actually reduced U.S. security, can quickly change realist international politics into 'imperialism' as previously defined. It is for this reason that besides questioning whether or not Iraq could pose a threat to U.S. security, which has been shown to be the case, attention must also be given to the policy made in response. In the following chapter this paper will look more closely at the foreign policy towards Iraq under Bill Clinton and will in particular look at the rationale behind Bill Clinton's decision to execute Operation Desert Fox to question whether or not it should be considered a viable response to a security threat.

## Chapter 2: Containment: Policy under the Clinton Administration and Operation Desert Fox.

With the end of the Gulf war in 1991, inspections by UNSCOM and international economic sanctions were to disarm Iraq and restrain them from rebuilding its weapon programmes. What followed was a policy of 'containment' by the U.S. under president George H. W. Bush senior to limit the threat Iraq could pose to the stability of the Persian Gulf and U.S. interests. When Clinton entered into office on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, 1993, he continued his predecessor's containment strategy and would continue to do so until the end of his time in office. Despite judging containment to have been a success, suspicions that Iraq continued to possess WMD on a relatively large scale and retained secret WMD and ballistic missiles programmes would lead Clinton's administration to continue to perceive Iraq as a significant threat to Persian Gulf security and U.S. security interests. While reluctant to use military force, Clinton would come to use it on several occasions to ensure Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions, largest of which would become Operation Desert Fox. After continued deception by Iraq on its compliance with disarmament, their repeated impeding of UNSCOM inspection and their eventual suspension of cooperation with UNSCOM in 1998, the U.S. together with the U.K started a four-day bombing operation on Iraqi targets to force Saddam's regime to follow UN obligations. This following chapter will look into Clinton's policy towards Iraq and question whether or Operation Desert Fox should be seen as a rational 'realist' response towards a perceived threat, or not.

### 2.1: Policy under the Clinton Administration

The containment policy of both Bush senior as Clinton was comprised of three core objectives, the disarmament of Iraq through UN inspections; economic sanctions to prevent Iraq from rebuilding a substantial military force; and the continued threat and possible use of military force to punish noncompliance.<sup>44</sup> These policies were to be continued until Iraq had fully complied with all UN resolutions and could be rehabilitated' into the international community. "The fundamental approach was to keep Saddam "in his box" and isolated from world affairs."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ritchy, *The Political Road to War with Iraq*, 25-26.

<sup>45</sup> James D. Boys, *Clinton's Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World*, (London: Bloomsbury Academics, 2015): 258.

Despite relative success to disarm Iraq through UNSCOM inspections and economic sanctions,<sup>46</sup> Saddam's uncooperativeness, obstruction and deception of UNSCOM inspections caused the U.S, along with the UN, to continue to perceive Iraq as a significant threat to the region and its interests.<sup>47</sup>

Because of this, it became clear that with an Iraq under Saddam Hussein, a resolution to the conflict with Iraq would become unattainable. In addition, as congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act in October, 1998, it became a requirement for the Clinton administration to make regime change a priority in its foreign policy towards Iraq. The Clinton administration, while recognizing that a regime change was a necessity, however argued against using military force to accomplish this.<sup>48</sup> The main strategy remained that through continued containment and support of Iraqi opposition forces, the U.S. would prevent Iraq from threatening U.S. security interests and wait for a natural regime change from within Iraq itself. Elizabeth A. Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs made it clear in her senate hearing in 1999 that: "it is very important in our view, that this be an Iraqi effort that we very much support. The administration does not feel comfortable, does not think it is appropriate, dictating to the Iraqi people what the regime change would be."<sup>49</sup> A more 'realist'<sup>50</sup> explanation for this however was given by Walter B. Slocombe, Under Secretary of Defence who argued that "there are no military solutions to many of the problems in dealing with Iraq and military over-reaction would disserve our interests and needlessly endanger our personnel."<sup>51</sup> Force was only to be used to enforce the resolutions set by UN Security Council and threats were to be addressed through cooperated action.<sup>52</sup> Any military action outside of this context would have alienated allies and further destabilized the region, thus actually decreasing U.S. security interests.

It can thus be argued that Clinton's containment policy was a rational response to the perceived threat of Iraq. While it certainly projected its power in the region to direct Iraqi policy, it did so in complete regard to the protection of U.S. security interests. Containment should be seen as both ensuring stability within the region, as a policy intent on reintegrating Iraq into the region without endangerment to U.S. security interests. It can however be argued that Operation Desert Fox was in fact one action where a show of power actually reduced U.S. security. Without authorization

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<sup>46</sup> Lopez, George A., and David Cortright. "Containing Iraq: Sanctions Worked." *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 4 (2004): 91.

<sup>47</sup> Ritchie, *The Political Road to War with Iraq*, 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth A. Jones, *United States Policy Toward Iraq S. Hrg. 106-41*, Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senates, March 9, 1999. Accessed on 15 June, 2021; <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-106shrg56320/html/CHRG-106shrg56320.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> 'Realist' in the sense of a realist perspective within international relations theory.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Slocombe, *Statement of the Honorable Walter B. Slocombe: Defense Aspects of United States Policy toward Iraq*, U.S. Senate Armed Service Committee, 19 September 2000. Accessed on 15 June, 2021; <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/slocombes-remarks-senate-iraq>.

<sup>52</sup> Ritchie, *The Political Road to War with Iraq*, 33.

from the UN security council, the US and UK decided on an extensive four day bombing, supposedly alienating both allies as well as those who had so far been supporting action against Iraq. In addition, it risked future Iraq cooperation with UNSCOM inspections, something Clinton actually warned against in November 1998 when he made clear that the end of UNSCOM would lead to “no oversight, no insight, no involvement in what is going on within Iraq.”<sup>53</sup> What then led to this policy decision and how should it be understood?

## 2.2: Operation Desert Fox

The U.S. repeatedly used force to achieve its goals in Iraq. Since the end of the Gulf war, the U.S. conducted air and cruise missile strikes to compel Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions and enforce the containment policy. Throughout the later part of 1997 and the whole of 1998, Iraq began obstructing UNSCOM inspections more and more. In November 1997 UNSCOM had to withdraw its inspectors due to the repeated blocking of UNSCOM activities.<sup>54</sup> In February 1998, Iraq once again blocked inspectors by declining access to so-called “presidential” sites. This would eventually be mediated by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and inspections continued however the continued blocking of UNSCOM inspections and eventual declaration of non-compliance, would lead UNSCOM to withdraw from Iraq in November 1998.<sup>55</sup> As the U.S. and UK began building up forces in order to strike relevant targets, Saddam withdrew his declaration and once again pledged to comply with UN resolutions. Eventually, when in December 1998, head of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, reported to the Security Council that Iraq was once again not complying with WMD disarmament and Iraq, the U.S. along with the U.K. executed Operation Desert Fox without warning or authorization by the UN Security Council. Operation Desert Fox would come to launch approximately 600 aircraft sorties and 400 cruise missile strikes against around 100 targets, among which Iraqi intelligence and security forces facilities, presidential palaces, air defence systems, WMD sites, and economic targets.<sup>56</sup>

While Operation Desert Fox took place on a far larger scale than previous strikes had done, it remained a limited operation. The operation was designed to specifically target those facilities that were confirmed of producing or housing WMD’s and was planned to end relatively quickly due to the coming of Ramadan to prevent further alienating Muslim allies. Nonetheless, the three permanent

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<sup>53</sup> From Ritchy, *The Political Road to War with Iraq*, 29 who quoted it from Kagan R., ‘How to Attack Iraq,’ *The Weekly Standard* (16 November, 1998): 34.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Sarah Graham-Brown and Chris Toensing, “A Backgrounder on Inspections and Sanctions,” in *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, ed. Michah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003): 166.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Byman, “After the Storm: U.S. Policy toward Iraq since 1991.” *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 4 (2000): 510.

members, France, Russia and China along with Egypt all denounced the operation.<sup>57</sup> For example, Russia denounced the strikes as “unprovoked” and a “flagrant violation of the United Nations charter” and shortly afterwards recalled its ambassadors from Washington in protest.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile France responded by removing its forces from no-fly zones established to contain Saddam. In addition, following the operation Iraq refused further cooperation with UNSCOM unless sanctions were lifted and would only return to Iraq four years later. As a result, the U.S. lost its ‘eyes and ears’ in Iraq and a strategic asset. All of this would suggest to the irrationality of Operation Desert Fox and would come close to the definition of imperialism as earlier defined by reducing security through a show of power. In the following chapter with the help of direct communiques, this paper will however argue against this idea and show that Operation Desert Fox should in fact be seen as a rational response to a perceived security threat.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Mark J. Conversino, “Operation Desert Fox: Effectiveness with Unintended Consequences,” *Air War College*, 13 July, 2005. Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/ASPJ/journals/Chronicles/conversino.pdf>.

## Chapter 3: Source Analysis

The collection of sources consist of a total of eighty declassified documents from the Clinton administration in regards to Iraq. The collection has been made digitally available by the Clinton Presidential Library . From the analysis of the collection of primary sources, two main observations related to the main research question become clear: (1) that the alienation of friends and allies within the region has been overstated, and (2) the importance Clinton placed on protecting the credibility of the United Nations and the Security Council.

### 3.1 Alienation of Friends and Allies

As mentioned before, the alienation of friends and allies both internationally as within the region can be seen as proof for the irrationality of Clinton’s decision to execute Operation Desert Fox. It weakened political security while bringing little to no gain to the diminishment of Iraqi weapons capabilities.<sup>59</sup> What becomes clear from the primary sources however is that this view has largely been exaggerated. Both before as after the operation, Clinton made sure to communicate with allies in the region and France. From the transcribed calls made from December 17 to December 19 it becomes clear that the leaders of essential allies in the Middle-East such as Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Pakistan supported the operation.<sup>60</sup> In addition, whereas France may have protested the decision publicly, the conversation with president Chirac on December 17 showed that while he may not have directly approved of the operation, he did not disapprove of it either.<sup>61</sup> Additionally he emphasized that he believed that “Saddam Hussein bears responsibility for the situation” and that he informed his ambassador to the UN that “there should be no division.”<sup>62</sup> As for Saudi-Arabia, Clinton communicated with Crown Prince Abdullah the day prior to the attacks wherein he both received approval for the operation as cooperation in communicating his approval with GCC,

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<sup>59</sup> Byman, “After the Storm,” 511.

<sup>60</sup> *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.73, Memorandum of telephone conversation on Dec. 17, 1998 Between Clinton and Prime Minister Netanyahu (p.45). Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>; *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.74, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Dec. 17, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and Hosni Mubarak (p.48). Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>; and *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.75, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Dec. 17, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and King Hussein of Jordan (p.51). Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

<sup>61</sup> *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.76, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Dec. 17, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and Jacques Chirac (p.54). Accessed on 17 June, 2021;

<https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*.

Gulf Cooperation Council, partners.<sup>63</sup> Lastly and most notably, while public response from Russia was most severe, from communication with Boris Yeltsin on December 30 along with a declassified report from Pascual E. Carlos, the U.S. ambassador to Moscow, it becomes clear that this view should in fact be more nuanced. Firstly, while the recalling of the Russian ambassador has often been cited as a show of Russian anger, Pascual E. Carlos confirmed with Russian politicians that this was only a ‘low-key’ protest and had been told by the Russian Deputy Chief of Mission that even though the Russian ambassador was scheduled to leave permanently, “they are buying Vorontsov a two-way ticket.”<sup>64</sup> This implies that the protest was merely publicly and would not necessarily threaten U.S.-Russian relations in the future. This was also confirmed by Boris Yeltsin in his call on December 30<sup>th</sup> where he emphasized the need to “turn what has not been the best page in US-Russian relations.”<sup>65</sup>

What this all shows is that while France certainly did not approve of the operation and Russia was certainly not pleased by it, words like alienation are too strong to be used in this context. While it may have created tensions between these nations, it can’t be said that it threatened the political security of the U.S. in regards to foreign relations. It must be noted though that this is only in regard to relations between world leaders and thus does not take into account the outrage of the citizens or parliamentary body within the country and the subsequent domestic pressure on these governments. However while Neoclassical realism does take into account possible domestic pressures as a constraining variable on state behaviour, this is most often seen as an infrequent and unusual occurrence and rarely does it interfere with rational state behaviour.<sup>66</sup> Whereas Operation Desert Fox may have thus outraged the Duma in Russia and put pressure on the government to respond, severing international relations with the U.S. would have threatened Russia’s own security interests and would not be a rational foreign policy decision.

### 3.2 Protecting the Credibility of the United Nations

The second observation that becomes clear from the collection of primary sources is the emphasis Clinton placed on protecting the credibility of the United Nations. While this is in no way a new finding, this paper argues that it can in fact be seen as the main motivation for Operation Desert

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<sup>63</sup> *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.72, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Dec. 15, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and Crown Prince Abdullah (p.42). Accessed on 17 June, 2021;

<https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

<sup>64</sup> *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.84, Mail by Pascual E. Carlos on n.p. about the recalling of the Russian ambassador (p.69). Accessed on June 17, 2021; <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

<sup>65</sup> *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.91, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Dec. 30, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin (p.72). Accessed on 17 June, 2021;

<https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

<sup>66</sup> Ripsman, “Neoclassical Realism.”

Fox and that by protecting the credibility of the United Nations, Clinton was simultaneously protecting U.S. security interests.

The main objective of Operation Desert Fox has most often been seen as the degrading of Iraq's weapon capabilities. As a result, the successfulness of the operation has been determined in how many facilities were destroyed, how far it set Iraq's weapons programmes back, etc. An equally important objective however was responding to Saddam's continued disregard of promises and agreements made with the UN. In February 1998 the agreement between Kofi Annan and Saddam Hussein stated that Iraq would continue cooperation with UNSCOM under diplomatic supervision. In November 1998 when Iraq declared that it would cease cooperation with UNSCOM, the U.S. and UK prepared Operation Desert Thunder in response. Right before the operation commenced however, Saddam retracted his declaration and promised continued cooperation with UNSCOM. After Operation Desert Thunder had been called off at the last second, Clinton had made it clear that "if Saddam failed to cooperate fully, we would be prepared to act without delay, diplomacy or warning."<sup>67</sup> With Butler's report of Iraqi non-compliance in December 1998 then, it was clear that once again Saddam had reneged on his agreement and promise to the UN. If this continued without consequence, it would seriously call in question the authority of UN resolutions and the Security Council. Clinton also made this clear in his conversation with president Chirac on November 4 when he stated that "if he can shut down 'UNSCOM' with impunity, there must be a strong response, or the credibility of the Security Council will be damaged" and questioned, "what happens to countries when they pledge to complete an inspection regime and don't do it?"<sup>68</sup> Essentially, if Iraq showed that it could renege on agreements made with the UN without consequences, what would stop other countries from doing so too? Besides France, this concern was communicated similarly to Israel, Egypt, Jordan Saudi-Arabia and Russia.

What this shows is a serious concern over the credibility of the UN and the Security Council. However why should this be seen as a security threat to the U.S? This paper argues that this is because within the Clinton administration, international institutions were seen as the most effective tool in responding to global security threats. As proposed by Charles L. Glasser, within defensive realism, international organisations and institutions "can be understood largely as a means available to states for achieving their goals; when conditions facing a state make an international organisation

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<sup>67</sup> CNN, Transcript: President Clinton explains Iraq strike on Dec. 16, 1998. Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1998/12/16/transcripts/clinton.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Clinton Presidential Library, 1.76, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Nov. 4, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and Jacques Chirac (p.57). Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

the best means available, realism should predict that states will develop and use it.”<sup>69</sup> Acting through international institutions can help spread the security risks of responding to a perceived threat, provide international legitimacy to actions abroad and show that intervention is for ‘benign’ reasons instead of advancing national interests. Thus, “when an institution is the best means available, failing to help create it would reduce the state's security.”<sup>70</sup> What this also means then is that failing to protect the institution would similarly reduce state security. That international institutions can serve as an effective force to protect security interests does however not necessarily mean that nations have to work through these institutions. Just like they can be beneficial to international policy, they can also be constraining. Balancing the beneficial effects with the constraining effects is thus essential in working through these institutions.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Considering this, this paper argues that the cost of inaction would have outweighed the price of action in the case of Operation Desert Fox. Not only did it somewhat degrade the weapons capabilities of Iraq but more importantly responded to the threat to UN Security Council credibility. In addition, the cost of action in regards to alienation of allies has been shown to be significantly less than terms like alienation would suggest. While the action may have created tensions within the international system, it did not directly threaten the U.S. its political security. While it did lead to the permanent dismissal of UNSCOM in Iraq, from the communiques it becomes clear that Clinton believed the rational choice would be to let UNSCOM back in, otherwise, sanctions would be enough to contain Saddam.<sup>71</sup> While the possibility that UNSCOM would not be allowed back was taken into consideration, this was only a consideration and not a known fact. Operation Desert Fox should thus be seen as a rational response to a perceived threat. It was a show of force that responded to a perceived threat to U.S. security and did not intentionally or otherwise reduce overall security. Operation Desert Fox should thus not be defined as an imperialistic action as previously defined.

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<sup>69</sup> Charles L. Glasser, "Structural Realism in a More Complex World," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 410.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Clinton Presidential Library*, 1.76, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation on Dec. 17, 1998 Between Bill Clinton and Jacques Chirac (p.54). Accessed on 17 June, 2021; <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16192>.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, at the beginning of Clinton's first term in 1992, Iraq had become one of the major threats to U.S. security. The threat Iraq posed to the stability of the oil market which it had already threatened multiple times in the past brought serious concerns over the economic security of the U.S. Additionally, its development and its potential use of WMD's further destabilized the region and threatened essential U.S. allies in the region such as Israel and Saudi-Arabia. In response, Clinton continued his predecessor's policy of containment. It would allow the U.S. to contain Iraq's threat to the region while minimizing costs to the U.S. itself. While occasional force was used, this was only done when the containment policy had to be enforced, thus not involving the U.S. in a potential conflict that would actually decrease its security instead of ensuring it. Most notably, this paper has argued that within realist theory, similar to political and economic security, concerns over the credibility and effectiveness of international institutions should in fact be seen as a security interest and can thus shape foreign policy. Whereas Operation Desert Fox may have thus been seen as an irrational decision, as shown, the security concerns over inaction would have outweighed the concerns over action. Both Clinton's foreign policy towards Iraq as his decision to execute Operation Desert Fox should therefore be seen as a rational response to a security threat. As a result, while using such terms as U.S. imperialism and American empire can serve well as polemic connotations to object to Clinton's foreign policy in Iraq, it does not do justice to the reality of his foreign policy.

What this paper has tried to show is that terms such as imperialism and empire should not be applied too liberally. Policy which may seem imperialistic can often be a rational response to a perceived threat. What this paper however has not questioned is whether or not it was the 'correct' response, whether other decisions, equally rational, may have been more suitable to the situation at the time. Further research into which decisions could have alternatively been made can thus provide lessons for statecraft in the current era. Additionally, the research focused on Bill Clinton as the main actor within the administration's foreign policy. Additional research could however look at inter-communication by senior staff members in order see how the foreign policy exactly came into existence. Lastly, this paper has shown that the use of imperialism within a realist perspective is difficult to defend. While realists have thus criticised Bush for the irrationality of invading Iraq, this comes mainly from a *post hoc* analysis. A realist analysis of Bush's invasion should however be analysed solely by researching what led to the decision, not taking into account what the consequences were. Further research on Bush's invasion of Iraq could thus bring new insights into the American imperialism debate.

On a final point, this paper did not touch upon the moral implications of Clinton's foreign policy. It did not mention the numerous civilian casualties in many of the air strikes or the nearly half a million deaths caused by the economic sanctions. This is because this paper focused on the rationality of foreign policy rather than the morality of it. While morality may influence foreign policy, it does not create it. Moral implications may influence foreign policy in so far that it creates pressure on the domestic level and as a result may be brought into consideration however when the perceived threat to a nation's security is considered large enough, moral implications will only have a limited effect. It is thus also for this reason that this paper focused on distinctions between 'rational' or 'irrational' foreign policy instead of such distinctions as 'right' or 'wrong'.

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