

A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST EXPLANATION OF OVER-COMMITMENT:
THE CASE OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD IRAQ AFTER 9/11

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SİNAN DEMİRDÜZEN

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.



Prof. Serdar SAYAN
Director of the Graduate
School of Social Sciences

This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that, in my opinion, is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts in the field of International Relations of the Graduate School of Social Sciences.

Thesis Advisor

Assoc. Prof. Şaban KARDAŞ
(TOBB ETU, Political Science and International Relations)



Thesis Committee Members

Prof. Haldun YALÇINKAYA
(TOBB ETU, Political Science and International Relations)



Assoc. Prof. Özgür ÖZDAMAR
(Bilkent University, International Relations)



I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic traditions and the rules of ethical conduct. I also declare that, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work, as required by these traditions and the rules of ethical conduct.



Sinan DEMİRDÜZEN

ABSTRACT

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DEMİRDÜZEN, Sinan

M.A., International Relations

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Şaban KARDAŞ

The last few decades had shown the explanatory power of neoclassical realism on foreign policy analysis. The neoclassical realist theory of over-commitments suggests that domestic political factors can divert the FPEs from deciding with the sole consideration of systemic pressures. It is observed that states do not always act in line with the impositions of external factors and sometimes make more commitment than the dictation of the systemic stimuli. This thesis proposes three sub-hypotheses to explain the anomaly of over-commitment. This thesis argues that prestige seeking, interest group penetration (state capture) and coalition logrolling behaviors have the potential of diverting foreign policy decisions by intervening to the foreign policy making processes. The thesis applies the case study method to test the theory mentioned above. American foreign policy toward Iraq after 9/11 appears as the most likely scenario. This is due to the visibility of all the above mentioned domestic political factors during the period of 9/11 and the Iraq war of 2003.

Keywords: Neoclassical Realism, Over-Commitment, Prestige, Interest Groups, Coalition logrolling, Foreign Policy, Iraq, 9/11, Iraq War

ÖZ

AŞIRI ANGAJMANIN NEOKLASİK REALİST AÇIKLAMASI: 11 EYLÜL SONRASI A.B.D.'NİN IRAK POLİTİKASI

DEMİRDÜZEN, Sinan

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Şaban KARDAŞ

Son 30 yıllık süreç neoklasik realizmin dış politika analizi noktasındaki açıklayıcı gücünü göstermiştir. Neoklasik realist aşırı angajman teorisi, iç politik faktörlerin dış politika elitlerinin sadece sistemsel baskılara göre dış politika belirlemelerine müdahale edebileceğini ve bu yönüyle gereğinden fazla angajmanın gerçekleşebileceğini savunmaktadır. Ülkelerin, dış politika meselelerine sistemin dikte ettiğiinden daha angajmanda bulunduğu gözlemlenmiş ve bu durum yapısal realist bir yaklaşıma göre beklenmeyen bir durum olması sebebiyle bir anomali olarak nitelendirilmelidir. Bu tez, bahse konu anomalinin, öne sürdüğü üç adet alt hipotez ile açıklanabileceğini savunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda tez, prestij, çıkar gurupları ve karşılıklı destek koalisyonu davranışlarının potansiyel olarak sistemin ötesinde ve altında angajmana sebebiyet verebildiğini savunmaktadır. Bu tez yukarıda bahsi geçen teoriyi test etmek için vaka çalışması yönteminden faydalanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede A.B.D.'nin 11 Eylül sonrası Irak'a uyguladığı dış politika en muhtemel senaryo olarak göze çarpmaktadır. Nitekim yukarıda bahsedilen üç iç siyasi etkenin de 11 Eylül ile 2003 Irak savaşı arasında gözlemlenebilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neoklasik Realizm, Aşırı Angajman, Prestij, Çıkar Grupları, Karşılıklı Destek Koalisyonu, Dış Politika, Irak, 11 Eylül, Irak Savaşı



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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

FPE	: Foreign Policy Executive
EU	: European Union
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
TGNA	: Turkish Grand National Assembly
USA	: United States of America
UN	: United Nations
UNSC	: United Nations Security Council
WMD	: Weapons of Mass Destruction



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To explain and forecast foreign policy behaviors of states, International relations scholars often utilize theories, approaches, schools, models, and traditions (Donnelly 2019, 31). When it comes to examining the foreign policy behaviors of states, it is safe to state that realism as a tradition is the richest one among others in the literature. However, it is necessary to mention that there is no sole understanding in realist literature nor inside the immediate variations of it, such as neorealism and neoclassical realism. On the nature of foreign policy behaviors of states, not only scholars from different variations of realism but also scholars from the same variation are frequently in disagreement.

This thesis aims to explain why and how the anomaly of over-commitment occurs instead of a proper commitment that is suggested by systemic pressures. Foreign policy over-commitments are not only contrary to national interest but also endangers the security of states. This may happen in the long or short run, depending on their overall power and power loss due to such unnecessary commitments. Thus, this thesis will first and foremost explain the concept of over-commitment. Then it will explain why such behavior of states constitute a puzzle and why it is important. Afterward, three sub-hypotheses that aim to explain the anomaly of over-commitment will be introduced.

1.1. Over Commitment

The term over-commitment is used for the sake of its meaning in various works of foreign policy analysis, and Snyder used a similar term called “over-expansion” (Snyder 1994). However, the term over-commitment has never been conceptualized before to explain certain foreign policy behaviors. This thesis aims to set a specific theoretical framework to explain the anomaly of over-commitment. In that sense, the concept of over-commitment can be seen as an attempt to introduce a genuine approach to classify and analyze certain kinds of foreign policy behaviors of states.

To call a specific foreign policy of a state as over-commitment, we must observe a decision to make a degree of commitment that exceeds the directives of systemic pressures. Proper commitment, on the other hand, occurs if the state commits to foreign policy matters in line with the systemic pressures. If states make less commitment than the systemic directives, it is classified as “under-commitment.” Under-commitment refers to a commitment that is inadequate for perceived threats and interests that are associated with a specific foreign policy matter. Such behaviors of states can lead to a decline in security or loss of an opportunity for that specific state.¹ Over-commitment is the opposite of under-commitment. It refers to commitments that exceed the return of bounty or augmentation in security. It would be wrong to assume that policymakers are incapable of figuring what the proper commitment should be. Hence, we have to look at the process and influence the degree of different factors on the foreign policy decision-making process to attribute meaning to over-commitment policy

¹ Randall Schweller explains the opposite of what this thesis aims to. He argues that states may underbalance due to four domestic reason; Elite perception of external environment, elite perception and preferences, domestic political risk associated with proper balancing and risk-taking propensities of FPEs (Schweller 2004, 12).

selections. Since proper commitment is realized under the influence of systemic pressures, there must be other variable/s that intervenes and changes the behavior from the proper commitment to over-commitment. This thesis argues that the intervening variable for the foreign policy making process is the domestic factors. Domestic factors, in some cases, can intervene in the decision-making process and divert the foreign policy executives (FPEs) from deciding solely with the consideration of systemic pressures.

1.2. Importance of the Subject, Outline of the Thesis and the Puzzle

This thesis is important since it tries to explain the factors that lead to over-commitments. It is important to understand why states overly commit to certain foreign policy matters. It is important because these commitments may lead to the misuse of capabilities, which eventually can lead to a decline in the global distribution of power. In some cases, it can even expose states to such a degree that they may find themselves defenseless. To solve a problem, first, we must set what the problem is. This thesis aims to set the problem rather than providing solutions to solve them.

To solve this anomaly and to detect the factors that lead to over-commitment, the thesis utilizes from neoclassical realist theory due to its inclusion of domestic factors as intervening variables. The thesis provides three sub-hypotheses to answer this puzzle, which all found their origin in the domestic factors. First, the thesis argues that the element of prestige is quite essential to states and leaders/foreign policy executives. Thus, states/leaders, in some cases, over-commit to foreign policy matters to secure their prestige or to avoid other major powers from gaining prestige. Second, domestic interest groups within states can capture the foreign policy making process.

Since the interest of such groups is not always the same as the national interest, these groups can lead states to commit to the issues that are irrelevant to their national security. These groups may capture the decision-making process of states through influencing or placing the people at the executive level. They can use their capabilities to control the media and public opinion. Finally, the thesis argues that these interest groups can form coalitions through logrolling, which can affect the FPEs and their perception towards the issue. In such cases, not only states end up over-committing to foreign policy matters but also, this commitment outruns the initial commitment expectations of all individual interest groups as well. After discussing these hypotheses under the framework of neoclassical realism, this thesis will conduct a case study to test hypotheses. The main aim of the case study is to test hypotheses and find out which hypothesis has more explanatory power over others. For this reason, the selection of the case is with the principle of “most likely case” to be able to observe domestic factors that the thesis focuses on.

This thesis aims to widen the foreign policy analysis and the neoclassical realist literature by attempting to explain the over-commitment behaviors of states. The purpose of the thesis is to introduce an explanation for the over-commitment behaviors of states. Over-commitment occurs when states commit to foreign policy matters that are insignificant to their national security/interest. Foreign Policy of the United States toward Iraq after the 9/11 terrorist attacks will be studied to test the hypotheses of the thesis. The decision of the United States to go to war with Iraq appears as the most likely scenario not only because of the outcome but because of the appearance of domestic political factors as strong variables.

This thesis, however, accepts that states form their foreign policies in line with national interest *ceteris paribus*, meaning that decision-makers decide solely by the

directives of systemic pressures. However, things do not develop as other factors stay equal; on the contrary, they are subject to change either structurally or domestically.

Woodrow Wilson, for instance, in one of his speeches, argued that it would be a perilous thing to determine the foreign policy of a country by just looking at material interests (Morgenthau 1952). In this context, it is possible to argue that foreign policy decisions are not only about material gains like territory and natural resources, but it is also about immaterial gains. Immaterial gains in that sense are useful to explain foreign policy decisions that at first sight appear as illogical and against the national interest of the country. However, understanding whether a foreign policy decision is related to the immaterial gains is quite difficult to observe, and it is quite subjective. In many cases, it is argued that countries are involved in foreign policy matters not because of tangible gains but because of their prestige and international status (Taliaferro 2004). In that sense, the thesis argues that leaders may use foreign policy as a tool that can sometimes lead to over-commitments.

Neoclassical realism, which is named by Gideon Rose², offers a good range of tools to explain the foreign policy decision of states when pure structural and domestic explanations fail to explain (Rose 1998). It enables IR scholars to use realism as a foreign policy theory without forcing them to ignore structural elements and rational decision-making processes. In the meantime, it does not limit the scholars with structural impositions but offers domestic political factors as the intervening variables.

Neoclassical realism is already in use for foreign policy theory building; the balance of risk theory (Taliaferro 2004), the theory of under balancing (Schweller

² Gideon Rose published a review article on 1998 and called few political scientist as neoclassical realists. He invented the term by himself and argued that neoclassical realism can bring the domestic politics into consideration while not avoiding the FPE and structural constraints.

2004), and granular theory of balancing (Lobell 2018) are just a few amongst many. This thesis is similar to the above-mentioned examples in a way that all brings the factor of state back into the decision-making process. Also, none of them ignores the structural constraints but finds them insufficient to explain the specific foreign policy behaviors of states.

Although it is risky to participate in a foreign policy matter proactively, FPEs can sometimes reach to a conclusion that not acting may constitute a greater risk. In such cases, states may challenge the great powers to try their chances. Japan's decision to attack Pearl Harbor, participation of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, and the invasion attempt of Anatolia by Greece immediately after WWI are few examples of it. Such attempts can be explained in two ways. These states are, as Randall Schweller (1994) points out, either revisionist/opportunist or they act with preemptive incentives. Thus, it is not easy to decide on the nature of the actions of states, whether they are offensive or defensive, and whether their actions are the result of an internal or structural imposition. Hence, we may not easily call a state as offensive or defensive by just looking at their actions. Underlining intentions must be revealed and understood to decide whether the active military involvement of a state in foreign policy matters is defensive or offensive.

Randall Schweller sets two important steps to understand whether a research program makes any contribution to the field or not. Although it is settled for a research program, these steps can also be applied to this thesis. The first and maybe the most important step is the originality of the research question and the curiosity toward the puzzle that it tries to resolve (Schweller 2003, 315). The puzzle that this thesis tries to resolve is the mystery of over-commitment that states make in certain cases. Such behaviors of states are against the presumptions of neorealism, which requires a

broader approach. Second, it should provide reasonable and explanatory answers to this puzzle by providing germane hypotheses and supporting these hypotheses with the methodology that is sound and accurate (Schweller 2003, 315). In this thesis, there exist three sub-hypotheses that target the puzzle that the thesis intends to solve. These hypotheses will be tested with a case study that constitutes the methodology of the thesis. In that sense, this thesis uses a case study not to explain every aspects of the case but to test the theory.





CHAPTER II

HYPOTHESES, METHODOLOGY AND THE LITERATURE

REVIEW

It is not always easy to understand what a specific political issue in some parts of the world means for the dominant powers of the international system. It becomes even more complicated when these dominant powers have complex democratic systems like the United States, which enables domestic factors to intervene in the policy-making processes.

Some scholars argued that there has been a shift from unipolarity to multipolarity, due to developments such as; the rise of China, and the reemergence of Russia as an active regional power, (Posen 2011). However, it still appears safe to indicate that the United States is the unquestionable leading power of international politics. The military and economic superiority of the United States gives her a range of opportunities that none of the actors enjoy. Thus, the case of the United States is not unique, but it is also quite essential to understand the effect of the domestic factors in foreign policy making processes. Given that the United States is the strongest nation of international politics, one may evaluate that there exists almost no systemic constraint for its foreign policymaking. However, if the United States wants to remain as the greatest power of international politics, it has to mind the systemic pressures to sustain or increase its relative power and security.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has chosen to act in different regions of the world where there was no direct threat to its national security. The United States made enormous commitments to conduct its activities in these

insignificant regions. Hence, especially when studying great powers, it is not always easy to predict how much commitment will they make to certain foreign policy matters. In other words, states may overly commit to the foreign policy matters in which they perceive quite little threat or foreseen quite little interest. That is the very reason why these commitments named over-commitments in this thesis.

There are several explanations for such actions of major powers in the literature. Taliaferro, for instance, suggests that states sometimes follow risky decisions for potential minor benefits. In some cases, nations may find themselves sticking to their costly abroad missions that would bring too little when compared with their commitments. The reason that major powers stick to their costly missions abroad can be explained with their international status or prestige (Taliaferro 2004, 178).

During the Cold War, the United States spent \$168 billion (equals more than 1 trillion US dollars in 2019 dollar) just in Vietnam War, and more than 58.000 Americans lost their lives (Spector 2019). It is difficult to say what the United States earned from this war or what it could have earned if it had won. Of course, the lives of Americans cannot be part of these calculations, but it can be speculated whether it worth or could have worth 1 trillion Dollars or not.

2.1. Hypotheses

The aim of this thesis is to understand the anomaly of over-commitment that states often do. Explaining this anomaly is a need and necessity that requires a theoretical base. The thesis uses neoclassical realist theory to build its hypotheses. To be more exact, it sets systemic pressures as the independent variable and domestic factors as the intervening variable, whereas the dependent variable is the foreign policy of states.

The thesis suggests that under normal conditions, states decide on their commitment level in line with the systemic pressures.

H1: Under normal conditions, states determine their degree of commitment in line with the systemic pressures, which lead to a proper commitment.

However, domestic factors can intervene and may complicate the commitment behavior of states in certain foreign policy matters. Thus, the second hypotheses suggest that:

H2: When domestic factors intervene in the decision-making process, states are more likely to make over-commitments to a specific foreign policy matter.

The existing literature suggests that over-commitment behavior can stem from three different domestic factors. The first one is the intangible gains like status and prestige as Taliaferro points out (Taliaferro 2004, 178). Countries and leaders, at the beginning of an international issue, may start committing to a foreign policy matter with baby steps and may end up over-committing. Such behaviors occur when the issues do not pose a great deal of threat to the national interest/security of the state. Yet, as time goes by and the involvement of other powers rises or as the issue becomes complicated, initial commitments become less and less significant. As a result, states find themselves between two options; they either continue their commitments or put an end to it.

In some cases, systemic pressures may suggest a withdrawal from commitments, yet FPEs might still decide to make further commitments to secure their international/domestic status. However, since international status/prestige (national prestige) may also be dictated by systemic pressures as well, this thesis will not consider such behaviors as over-commitment. The thesis will focus on the prestige

seeking behaviors that stem from leaders and the strategic culture of the country. So, the first sub-hypothesis of the thesis suggests that

H2a: when the prestige or the status of a leader/country is at stake, it is more likely that they will over commit to the foreign policy issues that are irrelevant to their national interest

Another reason that leads states to over commit is the power and penetration capabilities of different interest groups towards FPEs. More the FPEs are open manipulations from different interest groups such as lobbies, businesses or different institutions within the country, the more likely they are to be diverted from making decisions with the sole consideration of the systemic stimuli. This brings up the second hypothesis:

H2b: the more penetration there is from the interest groups to FPEs more likely that states will over commit to the foreign policy issues that are irrelevant to their national interest.

Penetration from different interest groups may lead the country to commit more than it should simply due to the narrow goals that they set. When FPEs are alone to decide, without the influence of different interest groups, the more likely they are to consider the issue holistically, and decide with the consideration of national goals, risks and security threats.

In some cases, different government bodies or interest groups may find themselves supporting the same political decision towards a specific foreign policy matter. Even if these groups do not share the same view towards this foreign policy matter, coalition logrolling is still a possibility (Snyder 1994). Jack Snyder (1994, 17), in *Myths of Empire*, suggests that in such cases, the outcome is more extreme than any particular group would have intended in the first place. Hence, the third hypothesis suggests that;

H2c: More the interest groups/government bodies that are in favor of committing to a foreign policy matter, the more likely that the state will make over-commitments.

2.2. Measurement

Although where to look for the measurement of commitment is quite simple, measuring it is quite challenging and requires a certain kind of method/s to demonstrate the effect of domestic factors as an intervening variable. Almost all qualitative researches share the same difficulty. In qualitative methods, it is quite rare to come up with a perfect system of measurement for the variables (King Keohane Verba 1995, 210).

For any foreign policy matter, there exist three broad foreign policy options for states to select. The first option is to “do nothing”/isolationism, which suggests that states should avoid making any commitments to the foreign policy matter (Ravenal 1980, 34; Art 2004, 172-6). The second is to make an indirect commitment, which means not committing on the ground directly but through supporting allies, so that they can maintain the interest of the great power without its direct involvement (Walt and Mearsheimer 2016; Art 2004, 176-177). The third option is to make a direct commitment to the foreign policy issue, which includes every direct initiative that can be taken by the country itself, such as; diplomacy, sanctions and use of force.

Proper commitment can be realized by the sole consideration of the systemic pressures. To understand what the proper commitment is for a given foreign policy matter, one should clarify the national interest of the country and develop the policy accordingly. While doing that, states should also mind the equilibrium between the commitment and the perceived outcomes. This thesis will utilize mainstream literature to detect foreign policy options that are directed by the system.



Figure 2.1. Foreign Policy Options

There exist unlimited policy options between point zero and two. Anyone of the policies mentioned above may appear as a proper commitment depending on the directive of the system. Proper commitment refers to the ideal amount of commitment that can be taken by the state, which is for the sake of preserving or increasing its share in the global distribution of power. This is also the dictation of the system. For a commitment to be proper, states should calculate the opportunities and perceived threats and decide solely by the consideration of these factors. The combination of two can be seen as the definition of national interest. Let us assume that point 1 is the proper commitment that is dictated by the system to the state. If the state chooses a commitment level that is between 0 and 0.999... it is called under-commitment, and if it is between 1.000...1 and 2 it is called over-commitment. Point two can be seen as total war, which refers to the complete usage of all resources. If point zero is the proper commitment, there cannot be any under-commitments since states cannot do less than doing nothing. If proper commitment is total war, then there exist no over-commitment possibilities. This is illustrated in the figure 2.2.

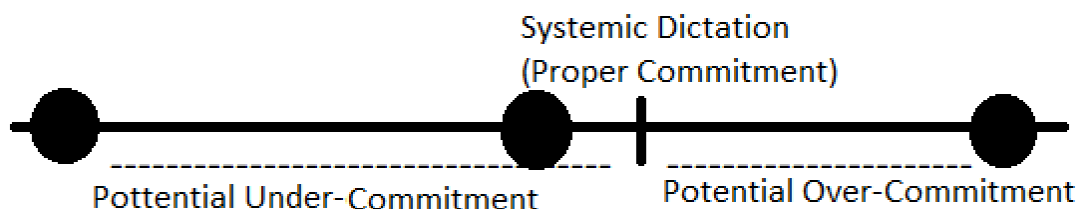


Figure 2.2. Classification of Commitment

However, states do not always decide on their foreign policies by the sole consideration of systemic pressures. Domestic factors have the potential of leading states to make over-commitment. Though it is not required to look at the domestic factors to understand the level of commitment, we still need to examine domestic factors to reveal the causal link between commitment level and intervening variable (domestic factors).

2.3. Methodology

This thesis utilizes the case study method, which is a popular qualitative method that is used by political scientists to test their theories. In that sense, this thesis will examine the Iraq War of 2003 to test the over-commitment hypotheses that the thesis proposes. The purpose of the case study is to test the three sub-hypotheses that this thesis uses and to figure out which one of the hypotheses is more successful in explaining the over-commitment policies of states. Systemic pressures and domestic factors will be examined to measure the proper commitment and detect the underlying causes of over-commitment, which will enable us to understand which one of the sub-hypotheses is more explanatory in terms of decision-making processes of the states.

Although this thesis focuses on domestic factors to understand the anomaly of over-commitment, systemic pressures as an independent variable also require an explanation to see what the normal/proper foreign policy of states should be under normal conditions (absence of intervening variables). Thus, the neorealist foreign policy model should also be examined within the literature review to have a better understanding of the structure and the system of international politics. Hence, the

thesis will examine the literature for both independent and intervening variables in the following chapters.

2.3.a. Case Study Method

Although traditionally case study refers to understanding and interpreting specific historical or contemporary events, the usage of the case study for this thesis will be a tool to test the theoretical approach. As Levy puts it;

...qualitative methodologists began to think of a case as an instance of something else, of a theoretically defined class of events. They were willing to leave the explanation of individual historical episodes to historians and to focus instead on how case studies might contribute to the construction and validation of theoretical propositions (Levy 2008, 2).

This thesis is not different from others, as it uses the case study, not for the sake of the case itself but for testing the hypotheses and whether they can explain the case or not. The case selection of the thesis is the most-likely case design. The case of the *American foreign policy toward Iraq after 9/11* is not selected randomly. The thesis selects the case for the visibility of all the domestic factors that the thesis uses. Thus, measurement of the explanatory power of different domestic factors becomes possible.

Most-likely case design is useful for testing and comparing the hypotheses of this thesis. Thesis did not select the case randomly, simply because some cases are more important than others for the sake of testing the hypotheses (Levy 2008, 12). Least likely cases are designed with the logic of “if I can prove it in this scenario, I can prove it in any other.” Most likely cases, on the other hand, are designed with the assumption that “if it cannot be proven in this scenario, it cannot be proven at all” (Levy 2002, 442). In that sense, the most likely case design is fit to the falsification

approach of Karl Popper since it can be disproved with other case selections and by providing different explanations to the same cases.

The selection of the *foreign policy of the United States toward Iraq* as the case is due to the visibility of the penetration of multiple domestic factors to the foreign policy making process. These domestic factors are prestige seeking, state capture attempts and coalition logrolling. The selection of the Iraq war of 2003 as the case is due to the possibility that the intervening variables might have succeeded to divert FPEs to decide solely with the consideration of systemic factors.

2.3.b. Process Tracing

Process tracing is quite useful in casual processes and mechanisms between the dependent variable and the independent variable (George and Bennett, 2005, 206). Process tracing is almost essential for case study methods to make sense of the policies that states choose at the end of a process. Process tracing for neoclassical realist theory testing is useful for scholars to identify how the policy directives of the systemic stimuli can be interrupted by the domestic factors. The process tracing method enables scholars to develop a more coherent and earthly generalization on their hypotheses. The process-tracing method can be combined with most likely case design methods effectively. Levy (2008, 11) suggests that process tracing can enable scholars to empirically examine the alternative causal mechanisms that can be linked to the monitored patterns of covariation. George and Bennett (2005, 274) further argued that process tracing is a necessity for theory testing.

First, I will give the general background of the crisis and developments that made the war possible. The thesis will use the process tracing method to set the causal

link between domestic factors and foreign policy making processes. Process tracing will enable the thesis to reveal the penetration power and the effectiveness of the intervening variables.

2.4. Literature Review on Neoclassical Realism

For many years, realism accused of ignoring the domestic political factors for the analysis of foreign policy (Folker 1997, 2). However, for Waltz, neorealism did never assume the role of explaining every decision that states choose to follow. As Waltz (1996, 4) points out, neorealism is explanatory only when the external pressures dominate the internal factors, and when the opposite happens, he agrees that his theory requires some help. Scholars of international politics answered to the call of Waltz and came up with the theory of neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism intends to explain the behaviors of states in cases where internal factors find some chance to divert the decisions of states from the dictation of external pressures.

Randall Schweller explains the way neoclassical realism works in the following five stages;

Neoclassical realists emphasize problem-focused research that (1) seeks to clarify and extend the logic of basic (classical and structural) realist propositions, (2) employs the case-study method to test general theories, explain cases, and generate hypotheses, (3) incorporates first, second, and third image variables, (4) addresses important questions about foreign policy and national behavior, and (5) has produced a body of cumulative knowledge. (Schweller 2003, 317).

This thesis is in line with the stages as mentioned above. This thesis utilizes from; structural and domestic factors, case study to test the over-commitment theory, and examines the effect of the first and second image as domestic factors and structure as the third image. It also addresses an anomaly in foreign policy decisions of states and attempts to produce a body of cumulative knowledge.

The term neoclassical realism was first used by Gideon Rose in his review article of 1998, where he reviewed five different articles from five different political scientists³. Rose (1998) defined these scientists as realists, yet he further argued that their approach was beyond neorealism. Rose argued that there exist two different poles in foreign policy theories. The first one is the *Innenpolitik*, which claims that foreign policy decisions stem from domestic political factors (Rose 1998, 146). The second pole is the variations of structural realism. Both offensive and defensive realism argues that structural constraints are the ones that determine the foreign policy decisions of states (Rose 1998, 146). Rose locates neoclassical realism in between these two poles. Rose (1998, 154) argues that neoclassical realism sets structural constraints as its independent variables and internal factors as its intervening variable.

Kenneth Waltz, in his book *Theory of International Politics*, did not try to come up with a foreign policy theory. Instead, he defined what kind of structure does international politics have and what does it mean for the system (Waltz 1979). What Waltz did was to create a general theory that explains the nature of the structure and expected outcomes of state behaviors as a reaction. Waltz's structural realism expects similar units to act in the same way in similar circumstances. However, many argued that not all states were acting the same and not always the structural constraints are the sole cause of state actions. Randall Schweller, contrary to Waltz's fixed expectations, argues that the inner structures of states are different from each other, which can lead to different foreign policies. He splits states into four main categories⁴, which he

³From *Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of Americas World Role* by F. Zakaria, *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security* by M.E. Brown, . *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* by W. C. Wohlforth, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict* by T.J. Christensen, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitlers Strategy of World Conquest* by R.L. Schweller, William Curti Wohlforth

⁴ The first one is the lions who are status quo bias and their aim is to self-preservation. The second is the Lambs who are also status quo bias and aim to self-abnegation. The third is the Jackals who are

argues affects the foreign policy making process of states (Schweller 1994, 100). He argues that states are either status quo biased or revisionist. Revisionist states, to achieve their goals, believe that their only option is to challenge the status quo.⁵ Schweller's approach to states and foreign policy analysis is quite different than how most of the so-called neorealists are approaching to them. As its title suggests, he was bringing the state back into the picture as what original realism as a theory did in the first place. However, he did not treat states as fixed and identical entities. Schweller separates states into different categories, which he argues affects the foreign policy making of states.

Schweller (2004) wrote another article in 2004 in which he attempted to build a theoretical explanation for failed balancing behaviors, which he calls the *neoclassical theory of underbalancing*. Schweller (2004, 164) argues that systemic constraints, most of the time, are not the sole reason that drives leaders to select between possible policy options. Although balancing (when it is possible) behavior is the general tendency of states, FPEs should always consider the domestic cost of such behaviors and decide afterward (Schweller 2004, 164). Yet Schweller does not avoid the importance of the structural factors, as he says;

This is not to say, however, that they are oblivious to structural incentives. Rather, states respond (or not) to threats and opportunities in ways determined by both internal and external considerations of policy elites, who must reach consensus within an often decentralized and competitive political process. (Schweller 2004, 164).

revisionist with limited aims and looking for opportunities not so much of a risk taker. The last one is the wolves who have unlimited aims and much more of a risk taker.

⁵ Lions which can be seen as the leading power of the status quo prefers the current conjecture given that it's the one who benefits most and no intention of letting a change that would undermine its supremacy. Wolves on the other hand are not satisfied with the current distribution of power and they willing to take risks to get more share from the distribution of power.

Schweller's argues that the domestic political factors may lead to *underbalancing*, which is the opposite behavior of over-commitment.

2.4.a. Intervening variables of Neoclassical Realism

What this thesis means by the “penetration to FPEs” is important given that the answer to the anomaly of over-commitment lies in the penetration process of different domestic factors to FPEs. The answer to what these factors are and how they become influential on FPEs lies in the theoretical background of neoclassical realism. The latest theoretical comprehensive work on the intervening variable came out in 2016 with the second book of Steven Lobell, Jeffery Taliaferro, and Norrin Ripsman on neoclassical realism. They argue that there exist four different intervening variables;

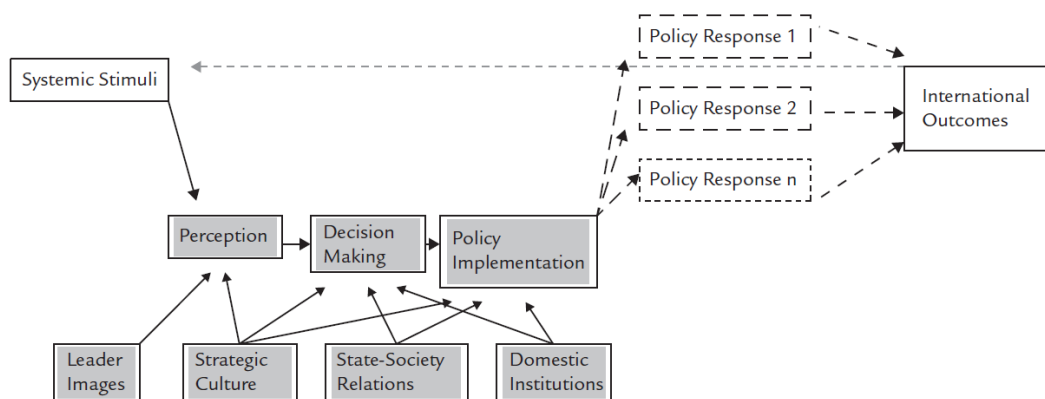


Figure 2.3. Effects of Domestic Factors (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 59)

Figure 2.3 shows that all four intervening variables have different effects in different stages of the policy making process. Setting these four intervening variables as the main intervening variables is important to avoid accusations of ad-hoc intervening variable selections (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 60).

Intervening variables of neoclassical realism are the domestic factors within a country that have the potential of intervening in the process of foreign policy making.

These domestic factors constitute the core of the hypotheses, as these factors are the ones that have the potential of making a difference in the foreign policy making process. Since the independent variable of the system is fixed for all three hypotheses, we need a good understanding of the intervening variables to understand the theoretical framework and the differences between these three hypotheses.

2.4.a.i. Leader Images

Leaders are important to understand the mindsets of FPEs. FPE can be anyone with an official title, who has considerable power in the decision-making process of a state. It usually consists of the president, ministers, members of parliament, high ranked commanders, advisors, and related high ranked bureaucrats from different government bodies. The more inclusive the regime, complex and plausible the issue is, the more possible it is for domestic political factors to divert the originally expected policy of systemic stimuli. Also, when systemic signals are not so clear, intervening variables can be more decisive. In other words, anarchy is murky and requires interpretation.

All information⁶ that FPEs get has to first go through their cognitive filters that are shaped with their former experiences and values (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 62). The United States, for instance, once considered USSR as an important ally, which later revolved into the main rival of the United States who needed to be dealt with a policy of containment. Kennan's long telegram was so influential and popular that many believed what was written on that telegram and did not even try to produce counterarguments (Larson 1985, 28).

⁶ Information here represents the systemic stimulus. Leaders may perceive any given information differently due to their former life and political experiences.

Characteristics of FPEs are also important when it comes to how they are to decide or influenced by others. Studies, for instance, have shown that lower the self-esteem of a person, the more possible it is to perceive him/her with sound and reasonable arguments (Larson 1985, 27).

It can be argued that neoclassical realism, to some degree, incorporates the first image of international politics via its intervening variable. In neoclassical realism, the first image is important in the sense that it can shape the perception toward an external source. It is not the initial factor but the reactional factor. The reaction of the leader to external sources is not the starting point, yet it is still part of the foreign policy making process, which is important to understand the underlying logic of neoclassical realism.

“Leader image” is important for this thesis due to its significance for the over-commitment decisions of states. Leaders tend to commit more than they should when they face a challenge to their prestige and status inside the country. John Glaser (2018, 175) argues that the status of leaders, policy elites and the population as a whole is quite important for these groups. Thus, it is logical to expect that leaders are more willing to make unnecessary commitments to foreign policy matters to secure their status and prestige as a politician.

2.4.a.ii. Strategic Culture

Strategic culture is important given that it is the only intervening variable among others that affects all three processes, namely perception, decision-making and policy implementation. Strategic culture consists of inter-related beliefs, assumptions and norms that society and FPEs share, which in a sense binds the FPEs, societal elites, and public as well (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 67). Unlike leader images,

strategic culture is not fixed and subject to reconstruction. National governments, in time, might be able to reshape the existing strategic culture and introduce a new set of beliefs to the public. Such changes can also be realized with major developments like war or coups, which are historical events for some states.

It can be argued that the ideology of a state can also affect the strategic culture of a country (Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell 2016, 69). Proxy wars during the Cold War show how ideological differences between countries can force them to balance each other in almost every part of the world.

2.4.a.iii. State-Society Relations and Domestic Institutions

It would not be wrong to argue that neoclassical realism as theory becomes useful under some circumstances, and neorealism is just enough to explain foreign policy decisions of states under other circumstances. These circumstances are highly dependent on the state-society relations and the formation of the domestic institutions of the state. Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell suggest that neorealism appears as a useful theory to explain and predict the foreign policy decisions of states when there exists a great deal of respect and trust to FPEs and not much consultation going on for foreign policy matters. However, in other circumstances, when there exists “extensive consultation during the policy making process and the participation of societal actors in policy formulation, it could result in a policy that satisfies the domestic interest, rather than exclusively international one”, neoclassical realism appears as a more useful theory than neorealism (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 71).

Also, interest groups do not necessarily need to manipulate the FPEs directly. Control over agenda and norms towards this agenda creates an indirect manipulation

on FPEs (Ripsman 2011). Access to media and other governmental bodies, sometimes, enable interest groups to set the agenda and norms for specific foreign policy matters. This way, interest groups, without directly getting into touch with FPEs, become able to manipulate the foreign policy making process.

State-society relations and the way that domestic institutions formed may lead to coalition politics (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 72). In some cases, specific or different interest groups may become so powerful, due to their power over FPEs, that FPEs become incapable of deciding against these interest groups. Hence, FPEs, in order to sustain their political career, choose to act with the preferences of interest groups that they depend on (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 77). This specific issue is directly related to the second and third hypotheses of this thesis, which will be examined more closely in the following subtitles.

2.4.b. Independent Variable

The independent variable of neoclassical realism is no different from the independent variable of neorealism. The structure of international relations is anarchic by nature, and there exists no automatic harmony in anarchy (Waltz 1959, 160). Anarchy exists because sovereign states do not intend to recognize any common superior that rules all (Waltz 1959, 173). Anarchy is similar to the state of nature in which man cannot find any authority other than himself to be judged by (Hobbes 1651,179). Thus, states are free from the consequences of their actions, and only others, if they are willing and capable enough, can punish the others by their freewill. For this very reason, power is the regulating source of international politics as

Thucydides puts it; “the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must” (Thucydides 431 BC, chapter XVII).

Waltz (1959, 203) argues that under anarchy, the primary objective of the state is to sustain its survival. In order to survive, states should ensure that their defense and alliance formation exceeds all the external threats. Waltz agrees that power does not bring total control of the system, yet it brings four main advantages, which are happened to shape international politics to some degree. Power provides autonomy, permits wider ranges of action, enables states to be selective on foreign policy matters and the way it should be conducted (Waltz 1979, 194-195). The First three advantages that Waltz highlighted are the reasons why the intervening variable came to be in the first place. Anarchy does not only constraint state but also provides autonomy. Hence, it provides policy options that are directly proportional to the amount of power that states possess.

Neorealism suggests that under the conditions of X (independent variable) then Y (dependent variable) is expected to be observed. However, social sciences are not that invariant and subject to interruption. Hence, frequent results are also acceptable in the social sciences, as well. For instance, when we say that people with criminal backgrounds would commit to crime again with a given probability may appear as a law like a statement as well (Waltz 1979, 1).

Neoclassical realism, in that sense, does not ignore the independent variable and agrees with the rule of if X then Y. However, there are times when intervening variables are capable enough to change the process. Intervening variables apply to every foreign policy making process, yet in some cases, they fail to change the outcome. This may occur due to two reasons. First, in some cases, the independent

variable can be so clear/serious that there may be left no other option to FPEs but to decide on policy Y. In other cases, policy Y (the policy that is imposed by the system) may also appear as a favorable policy for internal actors. Policy Y, for instance, may serve the interest of a specific interest group, leaders' image towards that specific policy may match with the directives of the independent variable. This means that systemic directives for a certain policy can also be the desired policy for domestic factors. Thus, just because a country selected a policy that the system imposes, it does not automatically mean that the systemic constraints were the sole determinant factor. However, this thesis examines the anomaly of over-commitment, and since the above-mentioned situations indicate a proper commitment, such cases are not the subjects of the thesis.

Systemic stimuli do not always dictate a single policy to follow. The independent variable may suggest that if a then one of the policies among b-c-d-e are expected to be followed by the state. In such cases, the independent variable hardly provides any help in the prediction process of a policy by a state (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 33).

2.4.b.i. International System and Its Structure

What states desire and what policy options are available to them is primarily decided by the place of the country in the international system (Rose 1998, 146). All variations of realism consider states as primary actors of the international system (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 35). Waltz argues that systems theory does not require a theory of foreign policy since it explains the system not by looking at its actors but by looking at systemic forces that regulate the actors as an economic theory

of markets tries to explain the market not by looking at the firms but looking at the rules of market and how such rules dictate the firms (Waltz 1979, 71-72). This, however, is not a good example of international politics. States, unlike firms, are sovereign entities that are free from any rule and sanctions. States are free of choosing their actions in international politics. Firms, however, should follow the rules and can be easily punished when they refuse to follow them by the authority. On the other hand, there exists no rule in international politics other than the force that comes from the inter-state relations and distribution of power (Waltz 1979, 71-72). Although systemic pressures dictate maximization of security and gains, this can be overruled by domestic factors simply because of incentives of leader and interest groups and the power that they hold to divert the policy that is imposed by the system.

Though systemic forces impose constraints on states and thus limit the foreign policy scope of them, it still does not say what policies states will follow. Instead, the international system sets the policies that states cannot endure to follow. Thus, it is safe to argue that neorealism by itself is incapable of explaining the foreign policy behaviors of states since the international system cannot point which policy states will follow among possible ones that were set by structural constraints. David Dessler gives the example of an office which has its elevators and stairways for getting in and out to the office and rational actors use these means to get in and out from the office other than jumping through windows or using the air-conditioning duct to get out from the office (Dessler 1989, 466). Structure of the international system, in that sense, serves as the structure of an office, which sets the possible options as office structure does with staircases and elevators.

Dessler suggests that the structure of the international system both enables the actions of states and constraints them. Structure, according to Dessler, is not only the

outcome of action but also the tool of it (Dessler 1989, 452). As Jervis puts it, “In a system, actions have unintended effects on the actor, others, and the system as a whole, which means that one cannot infer results from desires and expectations and vice versa” (Jervis 1998, 578).

The system in which international politics took place is not constant, severely complex, and subject to constant change. As Jervis points out, the system that we are dealing with is so interconnected with its units and elements that any change in either of them or change in their relations with each other can cause a butterfly effect and change the structure in either major or minor degrees that we might not be able to understand nor explain the causes of it fully (Jervis 1998, 570).

Anarchy is perceived differently in neoclassical realism when compared with neorealism. As Walt (2002, 211) puts it, neoclassical realism approaches to “anarchy as a permissive condition rather than an independent causal force.” Anarchy in international politics means the absence of rules and thus unpredictability of the actions of units. Although the force of power limits the actions of states, anarchy makes it certain that states may choose different courses of action independently from any rule there exists. This in itself contributes to the outcomes of actions, since the reaction to any action will also be formed under the rules/lawlessness of anarchy, anarchy itself becomes directly part of the path that leads to the outcomes.

2.5. Existing Answers to Over-Commitment

The main puzzle of this thesis is the over-commitments that states make in foreign policy matters where there lies very little or no national interest at all. The thesis, to reveal the puzzle of over commitment, proposes three hypotheses. In the first section, the effect of prestige and status on decision-makers and how this can lead to over-

commitments in certain foreign policy matters will be examined. The preservation of prestige and status is not only important to state as an entity, but it is also important for the leaders and policy makers to sustain their status and prestige within the country. Hence, national governments, when facing a threat of being kicked out from the office, use foreign policy as a tool to sustain their positions, which may result in over-commitment.

The second and third answers to over-commitment are the interest of one or more interest groups that can divert FPEs from forming foreign policies in line with systemic pressures. The second argument suggests that some interest groups may get so powerful that they can capture the state policy making process directly or indirectly through penetrating FPEs. The third and last argument suggests that these interest groups may form a coalition and can support each other on the same policies, which may affect FPEs to such a degree that their commitment to a specific foreign policy matter might exceed the desired commitment level of any individual interest group within that coalition.

2.5.a. Prestige Seeking, Status, and Over-Commitment

Almost all countries locate themselves somewhere in international politics, and they found themselves banded with this self-portraying. In some cases, this self-positionings becomes a burden for FPEs. Self-positioning may drive FPEs to make more commitment than they should. It is to prove to other actors of international politics and their public that where their nation stands in the global distribution of power. This may lead states to react to international developments that have nothing or very little to do with their national security or national interest.

The word “*praestigiae*” which means Juggler’s trick. Juggler deceives people with its fast hands so that the audience cannot understand where Juggler hide the item. Today, however, prestige refers to the respect and admiration that is given to someone or something (Cambridge Dictionary). However, by looking at the origin of the word, it can be argued that it also contains an element of deception.

As it comes to international relations Ralph Hatrey argues the following;

Prestige is not entirely a matter of calculation, but partly of indirect inference. In a diplomatic conflict the country which yields is likely to suffer in prestige because the fact of yielding is taken by the rest of the world to be evidence of conscious weakness. ...A decline of prestige is therefore an injury to be dreaded. ...A country will fight when it believes that its prestige in diplomacy is not equivalent to its real strength (Hawtrey 1952, 64-65).

So, it can be argued that countries commit in situations when the prestige of the stronger is not properly defined by other party/s or the weaker ones challenge it. In other words, when weaker parties challenge stronger ones, stronger nations tend to commit more than they should to secure the prestige (Hawtrey 1952, 64-65).

In that sense, prestige affects the decision-making process in two inter-related ways, and both can be seen as domestic factors that have the potential of leading to over-commitment. First, since there exist a pre-existing prestige and status for every state, leaders are constraint by this condition and feel an urge to act in a way to sustain the pre-existing prestige and status of the country. Since failing to sustain the current prestige of the country would also mean a loss of prestige for the leadership and thus jeopardizes the survival of the ruling government, as a result, leaders found themselves committing more than systemic impositions.

Prestige and status-seeking are usually beyond systemic aims rather, it is realized due to importance that is given to prestige and status by leaders, policy makers and national population as a whole (Glaser 2018, 175). Thus, policies for the sake of preserving or improving the prestige and status of a country usually stem from

domestic reasons rather than systemic aims. Although policies that are applied to increase the status and prestige level of a country can be seen as the directiveness of the system and thus can be seen as a proper commitment, we still cannot underestimate the role domestic politics played during this process.

Leaders may face domestic limitations during foreign policy making processes. To gain the support of the public and other power circles, leaders must contain or increase their prestige and status within the country to remain in power (Schweller 2004, 173-74). Thus, leaders may use foreign policy to increase their popularity and prestige within the state. However, such policies of leaders do not necessarily have to lead to over-commitments; in fact, they might as well lead to under-commitments. Schweller, for instance, argued that the pre-WWII grand strategies of Britain and France were examples of underbalancing behavior, and it is happened, to some degree, because of domestic factors in general and concerns of leaders and their political survival in particular (Schweller 2004, 187-198).

Taliaferro suggests that great powers often take risky decisions and commit to issues that are in the periphery. These issues are insignificant for their national interest/security and can lead them to make unnecessary spending (Taliaferro 2004, 182). Taliaferro's argument makes sense for both the Cold War and the post-Cold War era. During the Cold War, both the United States and USSR participate and committed to the foreign policy matters that did not directly threaten their security nor promise any significant gain that would add to their part in the global distribution of power. Both, for instance, committed greatly to the Korean War. The United States did not only spend billions of dollars in the Vietnam War, but they continuously escalated it and even extended the war to Laos and Cambodia. On the other hand, the USSR act with the intention of creating a sustainable and pro-USSR government in Afghanistan,

yet they found themselves in a guerrilla warfare, and create more hostility with the United States, which eventually contributed to the collapse of the Union (Taliaferro 2004, 177-178).

Prestige should be considered at two levels, one being the international status of the country and other as being the prestige of the domestic governments as their legitimacy and support can be affected by the outcomes of foreign affairs. Although it has two faces, we cannot separate the first from the second. It is because a decrease in countries' prestige will automatically affect the prestige of the leader.

The importance of the prestige of a country can also be seen as a domestic variable. After all, how much does the nation care about their prestige can be seen as the product of domestic politics. Justin Massie, for instance, argued that Canada's participation in the Afghanistan conflict was the product of domestic factors (Massie 2013, 285). He argued that Canada participate in the conflict was for the sake of its prestige, and its prestige seeking, he argued, stem from domestic political factors (Massie 2013, 285).

To conclude, the thesis acknowledges the role that prestige and status play in international politics and its role as everyday currency like power (Gilpin 1981, 31). However, what this thesis concern with is the prestige and the status seeking behaviors of domestic actors like leaders, FPEs, and the national population. Putting this aside, this thesis is concerned with the effect of such behaviors on the foreign policy decision-making process and whether such behaviors can lead to over-commitment or not.

2.5.b. Penetration of Interest Groups and Over-Commitment

The Second sub hypothesis of the thesis suggests that the penetration of interest groups to FPEs can affect the decision-making process of countries given their leverages over FPEs or/and manipulation capacity of them. The penetration of interest groups in that sense requires a close examination as they are proven to affect the decision-making process of states in foreign policy matters. The thesis argues that penetration of FPEs may result in “state capture” (Transparency International 2014, 2) which can be seen as the ultimate penetration degree. This behavior can either contribute or can directly lead to an over-commitment. This may happen because the policies will not be decided by the consideration of national interest but with the consideration of the interest of different groups.

The main puzzle regarding the effect of interest groups on foreign policy decisions of states is the question “how.” Rubenzer and Redd argue that there exist three contextual factors for interest groups⁷ to be effective on American foreign policy decisions (Rubenzer and Redd 2010, 760). The first one is the importance of the issue and whether FPEs are more or less on the same page with the interest groups. Less important subjects can become priorities with the pushing of interest groups. However, if there exists a serious foreign policy matter to be dealt with, pushing of interest groups may appear weaker (Rubenzer and Redd 2010, 760).

The second contextual factor is the permeability of the government, whether it enables penetration to these interest groups or not. Thus, Rubenzer and Redd argue that interest groups have more chance of affecting foreign policy decision making processes when the issue is subject to congressional approval (Rubenzer and Redd

⁷ Although they make these categorizations solely for ethnic interest groups we can generalize it to any other interest groups as well given that they are not sui generis to ethnic interest groups.

2010, 760). It is argued that the Senate and assemblies have more access points when compared with the executive bodies. Senators and members of parliaments, on the other hand, are more accessible than the executives (Rubenzer and Redd 2010, 760). Yet some interest groups may still be able to access the executives and high ranked FPEs. The political career of most American politicians depends on the support of interest groups through campaign finance and public opinion power that they hold. Thus, it can be argued that even the president, to some degree, becomes accessible to some of the interest groups.

The last contextual factor that Rubenzer and Redd's (2010, 760) mention is the effect of public opinion. Interest groups, in some cases, are not only able to grasp the support of the public, but they are also able to shape the public opinion and the agenda. Agenda setting power, public support, and public manipulation power of interest groups can limit the freedom of FPEs during the decision-making process of foreign policies. As Ripsman (2009, 171) argues, these elements should not be examined separately, given that they can affect each other depending on the context.

Ripsman argues that we need to understand which domestic interest group matters the most and under what international conditions they become most effective. He further emphasizes the importance of domestic conditions, political structure and finally their power to influence the foreign policy making processes (Ripsman 2009, 170).

Interest groups can affect both democratic and non-democratic governments, given that both need some degree of support from different interest groups, public, military and the public. (Ripsman 2009, 171). Thus, it makes more sense to create a foreign policy theory that includes both types of states rather than reduce it to

democratic nations solely. One can argue that democratic states are clearer about their objectives in their foreign policy making, yet many rejected this argument due to different signals that are sent by political parties and domestic actors (Taliaferro 2000, 151).

It is not always easy to find supportive documents to reveal the connection and the influence that lobbyists have on FPEs. As the former executive of pro-Israeli lobby group AIPAC once said: “A lobby is like a night flower, it thrives in the dark and dies in the sun” (Ahmad 2014, 37). Visibility may limit the ability of lobbyists, especially when their interest clashes with the interest of the public. Thus, lobbies often try to restructure the concept of “public interest” and make sure that it does not overlap with their interests (Ahmad 2014, 37). Public support is quite essential for the support of executive and legislative bodies of government, and without their support, interest groups may not divert foreign policy decisions of executives from systemic directives (Ahmad 2014, 37).

Although FPEs can be motivated by personal motives, and domestic actors can be motivated by their own interest, it is usually expected that the FPEs act with the directives of systemic stimulus, while domestic actors act with more personal, specific and domestic agendas (Ripsman 2009, 172). Although we assume that FPEs are more isolated from domestic goals, they still need to consider preserving one’s position as an executive (Ripsman 2009, 173). Hence, leaders and FPEs are willing to include domestic factors to their foreign policy making processes, which can lead to riskier policies, especially when they face the risk of losing their own power and seat (Ripsman 2009, 173).

Zakaria argues that overexpansion would always serve a few people while it cost very little for many (Zakaria 1992, 182). Interest groups such as businesses, foreign offices, and the military might take over the control of organs of government for their own set of goals and can divert the essential policies to be followed by the FPEs in the first place (Zakaria 1992, 182). As the number of concentrated interest group rises, the possibility of over-expansion of the state rise as well, given that there exists more possibility for these interest groups to penetrate to FPEs (Zakaria 1992, 182).

Inter-interest group relations are also very crucial to achieve their agendas to be more influential in the decision-making process. For instance, Evangelical Christians almost always favor Israel in issues related to the Middle East (New York Times 2018). Thus, if an interest group has more access to FPEs than other interest groups, it makes sense for others to form a good relationship with the influential interest groups. The process pretty much works in the same way as it is for political bodies. For instance, if Israel lobby wants to form a good relationship with the Evangelicals, they need to establish the philosophical base before in order to avoid opposition from the base of Evangelicals. Israel lobby was able to achieve this with the promotion of “Christian Zionism” which found its ground in the birth of Christ and the structure of that times Jerusalem. Hence, Christian Zionists argue that Jerusalem should belong to Jews as it belonged to them two millenniums ago. So, the legitimization and public favoring are also required in inter-interest group relations as well.

Manipulation of media is also important for interest groups as they can indirectly affect the policy makers. Israel Lobby, for instance, successfully controls the media to ensure that there exists no open debate in subjects that are related to Israel.

This way, they avoid negative comments that can lead public and policy makers to question the support that they are giving to Israel (Walt and Mearsheimer 2006, 19). Lind mentions that although major newspapers and television networks fairly give the news regarding the Middle East and Israeli-Palestine conflict, they mostly lack the historical and political debates regarding the conflict (Lind 2002). The effect of Israel lobby on media even goes as far as editorial interference when negative writings towards Israel appear in column drafts (Walt and Mearsheimer 2006, 20). For interest groups to divert FPEs in, their preferred policies should be justified in the eyes of the public, executives and politicians in general. Thus, media is not only important to convince and shape the views of decision makers, but it is also important to be more capable during their penetration to FPEs.

Think tanks in the United States, also have a considerable effect on foreign policy making. Interest groups, like Israel lobby, make considerable commitments to different think tanks, including Brookings Institution, to make sure that they develop policies that are in favor of Israel (Walt and Mearsheimer 2006, 20-1). Think tanks can shape the elite debate on foreign policy matters. Thus, they can set the perceptions of FPEs, which enable interest groups to indirectly intervene in the foreign policy making process (Ripsman 2009, 185).

The effect of interest groups varies, depending on the political system of the country, the conjecture of the international system, the power of the host country and their relations between one another. These interest groups may sometimes become so successful at diverting FPEs from the directives of the systemic stimuli that, it can cost billions of dollars, thousands of lives, and most importantly, the relative loss in the global distribution of power.

2.5.c. Coalition of Interest Groups and Over Commitment

I have already discussed the potential of a single interest group to capture a state policy making process and the degree that they can be effective. When interest groups form an informal, and sometimes unintentional coalitions, their power to influence rises greatly. In some cases, the power of such a coalition may lead to a level of commitment that none of the interest groups intended to commit in the first place. This is the very reason why studying the effectiveness of these coalitions is important. These coalitions, in some cases, can be so effective that, they can divert FPEs from the main foreign policy areas and may drive them to focus on matters that are quite irrelevant to the national interest of the country. Logrolling can make the issue more than what it is, which can lead FPEs to believe that there is a need for further commitment.

According to Snyder, explanation of the overexpansion lies not in the individual groups and their power to persuade policy makers. Instead, it lies in the coalitions that they formed, which enables them to appear stronger during the foreign policy making process. This happens due to their behavior of logrolling with one another, which eventually leads to the justification of their views and in some cases to over-commitments due to their composition of perception in the minds of decision makers (Snyder 1994, 17).

Interest groups do not necessarily need to agree on the same policy areas to demonstrate logrolling behaviors during decision-making processes. As Dennis Mueller points out, the U.S. Congress approves most of the proposals, although not legally and formally, through the promises of supports that Senators made to each other (Mueller 2003, 105). If traders are in the majority, non-traders and opposing units will automatically become disadvantageous, given that they did not only fail to accomplish

their aims, but they also lost the chance of a future endorsement. Thus, if the current voting map is more or less available to the voters, it is more likely Senators with a moderate view would be more inclined to cooperate with the traders and wish for future support (Mueller 2003, 106). This eventually will make the wave even bigger than it should be simply because people that are neutral or nothing to lose for supporting the issue will also participate in the wave-making process. Hence, the coalitions that are formed in the way of logrolling is not only making sense, but it is also a likely scenario, as it runs with the principle of “you scratch my back and I will scratch yours.” This behavior gets even more doable when the subject is foreign policy. Most of the elected politicians care about the daily domestic issues that are related with jobs, health, prices and taxes, which directly affect the everyday life of standard Americans. Hence these issues are the main concerns of elected politicians as they will need the support of the public in the upcoming elections.

In some cases, politicians may want to oppose to a proposal. However, Senators may still want to trade their votes for the sake of securing a future endorsement for a future proposal that they dearly care about. Joe Oppenheimer and Frohlich clarify the issue with the following example;

Assume each minority group stands alone in their preferences for a policy favorable to their group. ...But in addition to their standing alone on their “pet” issues let us assume that each group feels more intensely about “their” issue than they do about the other issues combined. In other words, let them be so concerned about getting their way on their “bread and butter” issue that they would prefer winning on it and losing on the other issues (Frohlich and Oppenheimer ,127)

Since foreign policy matters do not constitute the critical agenda for many politicians, it is easier for them to apply the strategy mentioned above.

Riker and Brams argue that logrolling coalitions indeed improve the condition of the one who participates in the process. They further argue that the conditions of the one that chooses not to participate in the coalition worsens (Riker and Brams 1973, 1236). Since trading of support is favorable to individuals, it is quite unavoidable, given that not trading results with the worsening of one's current condition (Riker and Brams 1973, 1236).

Snyder argues that selling myths, by interest group leaders, to decision makers is easier when they are part of a coalition. This is because there will be other leaders from different interest groups that also repeat the same myth, which is essential for the justification of an over-commitment to a foreign policy matter (Snyder 1994, 17). When interest groups act in such a manner, it becomes possible for them to hijack the main interest of the state and raise other issues as the priority. Also, in some cases, myths of interest groups may not only capture the minds of policy makers but also the creators of the myths as well (Snyder 1994, 17).

Snyder (1994, 32) argues that over-expansions, as a result of coalition logrolling, are more likely in undemocratic nations. Democratic nations, on the other hand, are more diffused, and their logrolling and mythmaking capacities are not as strong as the undemocratic nations. However, one might argue that the diffused structure of the interest groups may boost the environment for coalition logrolling, as these interest groups cannot affect the foreign policy makers as much as the cartel like groups in undemocratic states. Hence, interest groups in democratic states need the support of other groups in almost every political issue. The diffused structure of interest groups is, to some degree, a necessity rather than shortcoming for coalition logrolling. Snyder's theory focuses on the overexpansion behaviors of undemocratic

states. Snyder gives the examples of Japan and Germany during and before World War II to prove his point.

We should also clarify the meaning of overexpansion and over-commitment, as they may sound like two different concepts. Overexpansion can be seen as over-commitment as well, given that both terms may refer to extended engagement for specific foreign policy matter that works against the national interest of the state.

We still need to answer two questions which constitute the main puzzle of this thesis. How these less important foreign matters achieve to hijack the policy making bodies of states and how they end up with a commitment that none of the individual interest groups desire in the first place? Snyder tries to answer the first question as such;

An overcommitted coalition policy can cause a variety of second-order complications that mire the cartels still further. As the consequences of overexpansion become apparent, groups within the coalition jockey to shift the burdens of adjusting to overexpansion onto others. They may use imperialist appeals to mobilize mass allies in support of their own particular program, becoming captives of the success of this rhetoric. At the same time, coalition leaders must invent further strategic myths to explain why the state has become encircled. With multiple groups strongly committed to their own programs and no strong broker to enforce priorities, these secondary effects of the logrolling process deepen the overexpansion (Snyder 1994, 45).

So, as the over-commitment becomes clear to policy makers, interest groups use logrolling as a tool to make sure that they are not the only ones to be blamed at the end. More groups and individuals support the secondary issues as a result of the coalition logroll process, which enables the initial myth maker to hide in the shadows and agree with the new players as a regular actor.

According to Snyder, interest groups manage to hijack the state policies by creating a perception that the agenda of theirs is more important than the others. This way, other groups may feel to support the argument of the initial group. It is not only

to avoid glare but also not to be alienated by others that are logrolling (Snyder 1994, 42).

2.6. Link of Hypotheses to Intervening Variables of Neoclassical Realism and The Model of The Thesis

We can compose that the leader's image and strategic culture as intervening variables are reconciled with the first sub-hypotheses of the thesis (prestige and status). Life experience and the political agenda of leaders can affect the decision-making process and the amount of commitment that he/she is willing to make for the prestige of him/herself. In some cases, leaders can also make commitments to fulfill the self-portraying's of strategic culture. Hence, prestige seeking behaviors can be categorized under the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture.

The second "interest group penetration" and the third "coalition logrolling" sub-hypotheses are both related to the third "state-society relations" and forth "domestic institutions" intervening variables of the neoclassical realism. The political system and its relationship with the society are quite important to interest groups and possibilities available to them for penetration to the policy making process. The same is valid for the formation of a coalition between these groups. It makes more sense to examine these two domestic factors together rather than treating them as separate factors. These two domestic factors are directly related to the second and the third hypotheses of the thesis. The way domestic institutions formed and the effectiveness degree of them on foreign policy making processes are essential for the measure of the potential effect of societal actors. In addition, the level of penetration that societal groups, such as lobbies, have on domestic institutions is quite essential for the

measurement of the capacity of domestic factors, and their ability to divert countries from selecting policies that are directed by systemic factors.

Neoclassical realism agrees that systemic constraints limit but also offer options to states to select from. For this very reason, domestic factors are quite important given that domestic factors as intervening variables are responsible for the selection processes of policies among the ones that are presented by the system. Just because the system offers a variety of policy options to a state does not automatically mean that any of these policies are free of error. It can also be argued that the more powerful the state, the more options are revealed to them by the system. Since great powers are more capable than others, there exists a variety of policy options to them, which naturally makes the domestic factors even more important. For lesser states, however, there exist fewer policy options as they are bounded by their degree of power. Hence these states cannot endure the costly and dangerous policies as great powers can. The divergence capabilities of domestic factors can easily threaten the survival and sustainability of the lesser states. For great powers, however, the range for divergence increases greatly for domestic political factors. Hegemons, under unipolarity, enjoys being unchallenged by other powers or coalitions, which gives them the chance to apply almost any type of foreign policy without having to think of its survival in the short term. Thus, the influence of domestic factors can be very dangerous for both great and lesser powers.

2.6.a. The Theoretical Model

Illustration of commitment for neorealism and neoclassical realism can be seen in the following models;

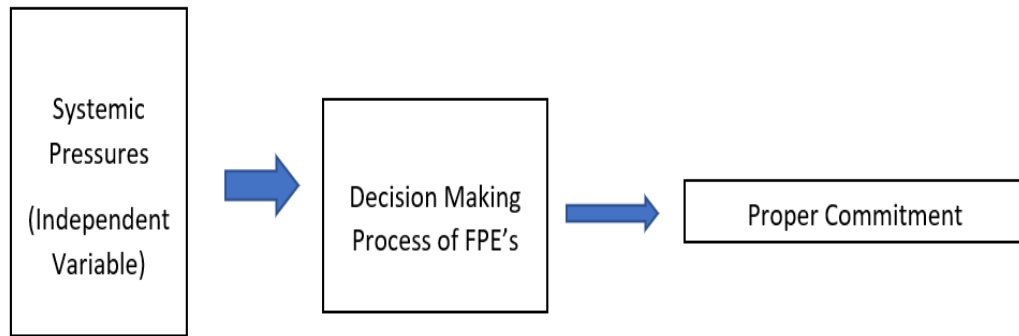


Figure 2.4. Neorealist Model for Foreign Policy Making

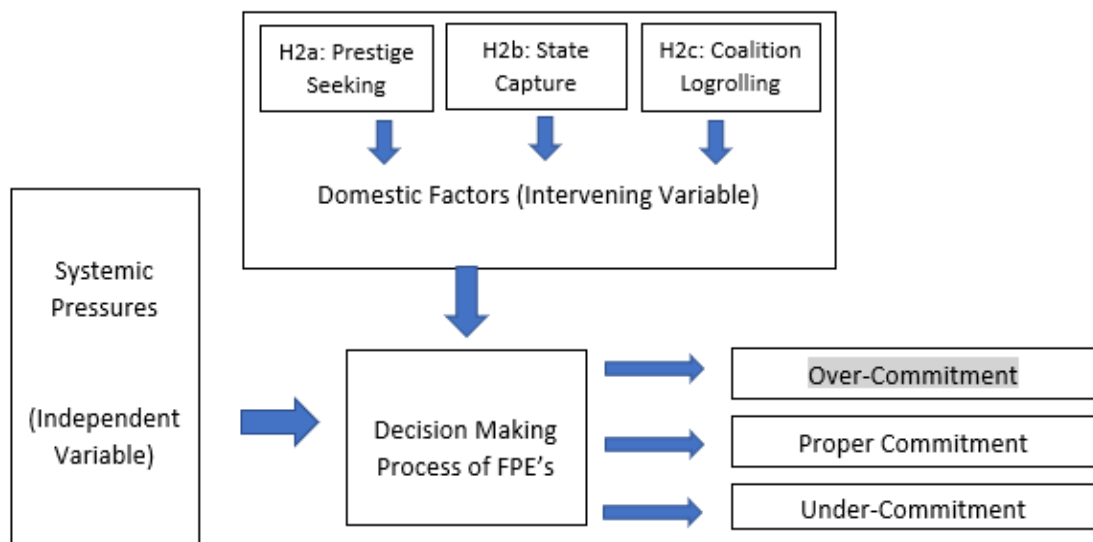


Figure 2.5. Neoclassical Realist Model for Commitment

As Figure 2.4. suggests, the pure neorealist approach expects a commitment to be proper thanks to the sole consideration of systemic pressures by FPEs. If there exists no penetration from domestic factors to the decision-making process, it is quite likely that the outcome will be a proper commitment. However, in some cases, even if domestic factors penetrate to the decision-making process, the outcome may still come out as proper commitment (figure 2.5). This may happen because of two reasons, either domestic factors point to the same logic as systemic pressures, or penetration fails to influence the FPEs. On the other hand, the thesis argues that in cases of over and under-

commitments, there should always be an effective penetration from domestic factors to FPEs.



CHAPTER III

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD IRAQ AFTER 9/11 AND THE DECISION TO LAUNCH THE WAR

In this chapter, the process that led to the Iraq War of 2003 will be examined under the context of over-commitment. Reasons, justifications, and the people who contributed to the decision of launching a war against Iraq will constitute the framework of the case. It will enable us to detect how the Iraq war of 2003 becomes possible, who promoted it and used which myths to convince the decision makers. As mentioned previously, process tracing is essential for the detection of the causal relationship between systemic and domestic factors, and the decision to go to war with Iraq. Along with the examination of the process, this case study will decide whether the decision to go to war with Iraq represents an example of over-commitment. Otherwise, even if we found causal relation between foreign policy making and domestic factors, the effectiveness of domestic factors will appear doubtful. As mentioned in the previous chapters, though domestic factors may intervene, it does not mean that their intervention always succeeds and diverts FPEs from committing properly. Hence, the case study should reveal that the Iraq War of 2003 represents more commitment than what the independent variable (systemic pressures) of the thesis suggests.

3.1. Background of the Crisis and The Process Tracing

As George Packer, regarding the decision of the United States to go to war with Iraq,

once said, “it still is not possible to be sure, and this remains the most remarkable thing about the Iraq War” (Packer 2005, 46). To understand the decision of the United States to go to war with Iraq, one should examine the effects of 9/11 on American foreign policy. This is important simply because American foreign policy understanding has sharply changed after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In this chapter, first, the effects of 9/11 on American foreign policy will be examined. Secondly, the process that led to the Iraq war and the background of it will be examined. Last but not least, dictation of the system and the domestic factors as intervening variable and commitment degree of the Iraq war of 2003 will be discussed in this chapter.

3.1.c. Effects of 9/11

End of the Cold War brought three developments in the 1990s; (1) “pervasive spread of globalization (2) “the growing resistance to it” and (3) “the growing awareness of the potential need to use military force” (Kurth 2007, 150). After the Cold War, the United States arose as the hegemon of the unipolar world structure. Additionally, the end of the Cold War brought the spread of globalization and gave the United States a new role in the world, which called by some scholars as “the coming of an American Empire” (Kurth 2007, 150). During this period, the ideas that conquered the World were peace, democracy and free markets (Kurth 2007, 151). The terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in September 2001 manifested the growing resistance to globalization. According to Kurt “globalization revolution” created winners such as; businesses, professional working classes in the United States, Europe, and Northeast Asia that are competitive in the global markets. However, it also created losers such as the people in the Middle East and North Africa, in which only a small part of the population was able to benefit from globalization. It eventually triggered a

reaction to globalization, the values that it represents, and to the most apparent country that supported it; the USA (Kurth 2007, 152).

Liberty and democracy “prevailed” in the 20th century against totalitarianism. It is argued that spreading this democratic-liberal system to the other parts of the world will not only make the world safer but also better (Jervis 2003, 366). Although this element of the doctrine seems quite nice, its combination with preventive strike and interventionist made it sound like a path to Kantian perpetual peace.

Weapons of Mass Destruction in general and nuclear weapons, in particular, brought a new dimension to asymmetric threats. The capability of terrorist organizations to attack the most critical locations of the most powerful country in the world raised such concerns even more. This development led the United States to introduce a preemptive strike element to its national security strategy against terrorist organizations and rogue states to prevent future catastrophes (Jervis 2003, 369). These threats were not possible to be contained with the traditional policy of containment. These terrorist organizations and rogue states were not as rational as the way that it was understood and experienced before. They were fanatics and much more prone to taking risks (Jervis 2003, 369). However, one may ask the question of “why these terrorist organizations and rogue states were posing a threat to the United States but not to others?”. Also, why the United States needed to take action and set a national security strategy towards these nations, while others were choosing to stay neutral or passive to the “rogue” states.

The terror attacks did not only create a strategical change in the country but also added a new lexicon to the IR terminology. A year after the attacks (on September 17, 2002), the Bush administration announced its new National Security Strategy of

the United States of America. He mentioned the relationship of terrorist networks with rogue states how their weak institutions, poverty, and corruption make these nations vulnerable to terrorist activities (NSS 2002, forewords). Furthermore, in this new strategy, there was an unprecedented method: unilateral preemption to promote democracy in these rogue states (NSS 2002).

In January 2002, President Bush gave a speech in Congress. He made it clear that the United States is willing to act against terrorism if the governments of the rogue states are not up for cooperation. In the same speech, he classified countries like North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as the axis of evil and especially mentioned Iraq as a country that supports terrorism. He also accused Iraq of developing weapons of mass destruction (Bush Speech, 2002). Bush administration before 9/11 was already aware of the threat that al Qaeda poses, yet they were more concern with Iraq in general and Saddam Hussein in particular. Bush himself, in his book, confessed that he had asked for a further examination of the possible terrorist attack from al Qaeda. The United States was already aware of bin Laden's long-lasting intent to attack the United States (Bush, 2010)⁸. Signal of a new doctrine for power was already started to show itself in early 2002 (The New Yorker, 2002).

Al Qaeda, on September 11, 2001, hi-jack the commercial airline planes and attack the nation's symbols of finance and military, which caused more than three thousand American lives (Cohen 2013, 302). After the attacks of 9/11, Bush met with his advisors to set the agenda for a response to these attacks. Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld try to convince President to take action against Iraq, who were certain that Saddam Hussein was somehow involved in these attacks (Cohen 2013, 302). On the other hand,

⁸ In the chapter: Day of Fire.

Secretary of State Powell and Vice President Cheney advised that al Qaeda should be the primary objective (Woodward 2005, 56). It was clear that there was no connection between the Saddam regime and Al Qaeda. On the contrary, they were hostile, and Al Qaeda did not cluster in Iraq but in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 229). This group of neoconservative advisors believed that they were bigger thinking, intellectual, and tougher minded than others in Washington (The New Yorker 2002). However, Bush could not wait for a proper intervention to be held against Iraq, which could have taken months or even years. Also, all the intelligent data was pointing out Usama bin Laden as the responsible one from the 9/11 attacks who was operating from Afghanistan (Cohen 2013, 302).

On the 20th of September 2001, President Bush gave a speech at the Congress where he openly asked for all terrorists to be turned down to the United States by Taliban. He also made it clear that the United States was to bring justice one way or other, as he said, “whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done” (Speech of President 2001). He also addressed the other nations and said, “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”. Countries including Russia and China offered their support to the United States, and NATO, for the first time in its history, conjured its mutual defense clause (Cohen 2013, 302-3).

Taliban refused the demands of the United States and refused to turn over bin Laden. The United States declared war on the Taliban and started to fight on October 7, 2001, along with the UN, British troops, and with the pledged support of Canada, Australia, Germany, and France (CFR 2019).

Victory for the United States in Afghanistan was easy. However, it was not a decisive one. Taliban escaped to the mountains, which became too much trouble for

the United States to resume the dense war against terrorism (Cohen 2013, 303). After Afghanistan, Bush and his advisors rapidly turn their eyes to Iraq. Even after the war ended, the Taliban attacked and took the lives of many Americans, which created the perception that there was no victory against terrorism at all. Thus, the fight against terrorism remained on the agenda of public and policy makers as still is.

After 9/11, there was constant pressure from neoconservatives to Bush. They were obsessed and determined to remove Saddam from power (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 247). One difference between Bush and Clinton administration can be seen as the positions of neoconservatives and pro-Israeli executives/advisors who found much more ground in Bush administration.

Bush just a day after the attacks gave an order to Richard Clarke⁹ to look for links between Iraq and the 9/11 attacks. Cheney claimed that one of his reporters found a meeting between an Iraqi intelligence agent and one of the 9/11 perpetrators (Ahmad 2014, 111). This later disproved by both the FBI and the CIA, which proved that the meeting was nothing but a myth (Ahmad 2014, 111).

However, in the following days of 9/11, nobody was daring enough to suggest that response to terrorist attacks should be a total war against Iraq. In the meeting at Camp David, none of the executives, including Vice President Cheney, suggested going war with Iraq, as they thought it would diminish the rightful position of the United States and would probably lead to a split in the post 9/11 coalition (Woodward 2004, 21). Chief of Staff H. Card and most others suggested that the initial target should be Afghanistan, not Iraq (Woodward 2004, 21). However, even the clarification and suggestions as such shows that Iraq was in the minds of some of the executives.

⁹ Counterterrorism Coordinator.

They needed to point out that the target should be Afghanistan rather than Iraq.

Wolfowitz, however, was still persistent in attacking Iraq first. He, without providing any proof to support his argument, went further to argue that there existed 10 to 50 percent of the possibility for Saddam's involvement in the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Woodward 2004, 22). The day after the meeting, President told Condoleezza Rice that the initial target was going to be Afghanistan, yet he made it clear that he was to return to the question of Iraq later (Woodward 2004, 22).

3.1.d. Road to War

Turkey and the Bush administration agreed on the transfer of American troops from Turkish soil to Iraq. However, TGNA rejected the proposal, and the Americans find themselves abandoned by their NATO ally (Kardaş 2010, 152). Bush himself states that the Turkish cooperation was quite essential for a quick victory as the National Security team was setting attack plan from the south (Kuwait), west (Saudi Arabia and Jordan) and north (Turkey) (Bush 2010, ch. Iraq). While the long-lasting NATO member was refusing the demands of the United States, which was crucial to the war against Iraq, Iran appear as enthusiastic. Iran was sending signals of rapprochement to the United States by seizing several al Qaeda operatives and helping Americans in their operations in Afghanistan (Cohen 2013, 305). Nevertheless, Cheney and Rumsfeld insisted on the policy of remaining hostile towards Iran and seek a policy of regime change, which is supported by neoconservatives who also happen to have strong support from the Israeli Right (Cohen 2013, 305). Although the support of Iran to anti-Israeli terror organizations was not denied by anyone in the United States, one cannot deny the importance of possible Iranian support during the Iraq War. Iran was as dedicated as the Americans for overthrowing the Saddam government in Iraq and

who could have provided a partial occupation from the North. Iranian call for rapprochement remain unanswered and Bush went even further and include Iran to the axis of evil. The United States' search for a strong ally in the region can be seen in the case of Turkey. Bush was shocked when the Turkish Parliament rejected the agreement between the two governments (Bush 2010, chp. on Iraq). It proves that the possible support of Iran was not a little gesture or insignificant contribution for the war against Iraq.

This thesis argues that one of the aspects of domestic political factors is their power of setting the agenda and by doing that diverting the FPEs from systemic priorities. Hence, a question is needed to be asked, why and how Iraq? After all, the United States classified not only Iraq but also Iran and North Korea as rogue states. So why did the Bush administration decided to go to war with Iraq rather than Iran or North Korea and what were the arguments? Arguably both North Korea and Iran could have been considered as the states that had the potential of posing a greater threat than Iraq poses to the United States.

At the time, it was known that North Korea had already had an advanced nuclear program that might as well had the potential to sell those weapons to al Qaeda. On the other hand, there existed no tangible information regarding Iraq's nuclear program (Cohen 2013, 306). The first thing that Rumsfeld asked, after assuming the office, was to see the Korean war plan, which is thought by many to be the next big thing. It was due to the potential threat that North Korea can pose with its questionable nuclear arsenal (Woodward 2004, 25). Thus, the justification for choosing Iraq instead of North Korea is needed from the Bush administration to justify the war against Iraq. To some scholars, however, the argument harbored the answer itself. The possibility that North Korean can do devastating harm to South Korea, substantial harm to Japan

and even to the United States made the idea of toppling the North Korean regime quite risky (Cohen 2013, 306). Hence, just a few months before the war, in January 2003, Bush made it clear that the United States had no intention of attacking North Korea and went even further to suggest an economic assistant to North Korea (Cohen 2013, 306).

Iran, which the United States had bad relations with since the hostage crisis of 1979, also considered as a rogue state. So, why the United States did not attack Iran rather than Iraq or why it did not launch a war to both of them? As mentioned earlier, Iran was already sending signals of rapprochement to the United States. Iran was also informally helping in the war against terrorism, which can be seen as the common enemy of both Iran and the United States. Iraq, however, was a recidivist state who attacked Kuwait during the presidency of Bush the father, fought with Iran and threatened the United States several times. Hence, there existed quite a few reasons to attack Iran when compared with Iraq. Iraq appeared a bit heavier on the scale, given to the historical and personal relationship between the two nations. Also, when compared with Iran, Iraq was an easier target to launch an attack. Not only in terms of military and population but also due to geography and surrendering nations. The United States occupied Iraq by utilizing or hoping to utilize its allies in the regions who happen to have borders with Iraq. To go to war with Iran, on the other hand, the United States would have to struggle in the mountains, could only transfer its troops from east and south-west by using its naval force. Also, Iraq has always been a target. After all, these two nations fought before in the First Gulf War, Saddam threaten to kill the Bush the Father, and the public was already aware of the “evil” degree of Iraq more than they do on Iran.

Bush was certain about Saddam's support for terrorism, his hostility against the United States, and the effort of Iraq to develop weapons of mass destruction such as Charbon, nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for more than ten years (Bush January 2002). The speech that Bush gave on January 29, 2002, was mostly about Iraq and just a step away from a declaration of war (Krauthammer 2002). National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice argued that Saddam had already acquired the infrastructure and scientists to develop a nuclear weapon. She further argued that it was only a matter of time for them to develop the weapons (CNN interview 2003). There was a belief in Washington that Saddam was hiding the weapons, and he was doing a pretty good job. UN's weapons inspection team was incapable of finding any tangible proof of WMD in Iraq (CNN interview 2003).

9/11 Terror attacks substantially changed the views of the president towards Saddam Hussein. It was not because that he thought Saddam was involved in the 9/11 attacks but because these attacks made it clear that the United States was much more vulnerable to attacks from much less powerful agents. The idea that Iraq, in the future, could have become nuclear power escalated such concerns even more.

Wolfowitz, who supported the war against Iraq since the Clinton administration, was not only expressing his views in small group meetings, but he was also pushing the administration by giving statements such as "ending states who sponsor terrorism" (The Guardian 21.09.2001). In late November 2001, Iraq was already on the table, and the president had already given the order to Rumsfeld to come up with a possible war scenario (Woodward 2004, 25). The logic that was behind the selection of Iraq as the secondary target after Afghanistan was the possibility of such a rogue state to have nuclear weapons in the future. This was always a possibility and it was always a threat to the United States, yet its potential in the mind of the president

has increased sharply after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Wolfowitz was not alone for being persistent in going after Iraq. As Bush stated in his book, then-Secretary of State Don Rumsfeld agreed to the suggestion of Wolfowitz with the following words “Dealing with Iraq would show a major commitment to antiterrorism” (Bush 2010, 611). Powell, Tenet and Cheney, however, argued that it would be premature to attack Iraq. They thought that it would not only let them lose the support of the coalition, but it can also be seen as bait and switch.

President Bush, three years after leaving the office, said that he never anticipated having a presidency as he did. He wanted to focus on domestic issues, yet found himself fighting in one war and another. He also confessed that the first real discussion regarding Iraq and Saddam’s involvement in 9/11 came on the 15th of September in camp David. President made it clear that the target was al-Qaeda/Afghanistan. In the same interview, he confessed that 9/11 had affected his whole presidency which caused him to give decisions that were controversial (George W. Bush: The 9/11 Interview 2011). In another interview in 2014, President Bush made it clear that his father’s decision to leave the Middle East after emancipating Kuwait was right, but he further argued that the circumstances had changed after 9/11. He argued that Saddam appeared as a bigger threat after 9/11 (George W. Bush discusses his father, Jeb in 2016, and the Iraq War 2014).

3.2. Process Analysis for Independent and intervening Variables

Rather than going into more details of the process that led to the decision to go to war with Iraq, it would be more meaningful to go to the detail of the variables and their links with the process. Hence following sections will continue to reveal details

on the process, yet it will be more particular. First, I will examine what the case says for the independent variable and then I will discuss the three domestic variables of the thesis and their intervening power for this case.

3.2.a. Analysis of the Independent Variable and the Proper Commitment

The thesis argued that for a policy to be called as an over-commitment, commitment level should exceed the hectoring directives of the system. Thus, to define the Iraq War as an over-commitment. First, we should reveal what the system suggests to the United States in terms of Iraq. If I detect a commitment that is beyond the directiveness of the system, then the penetration degree of the domestic factors are needed. It is essential to reveal which one of the intervening variables, that the thesis put forward, shows signs of penetration and effectiveness on the foreign policy making process.

My model for the thesis states that systemic pressure is the independent variable for the policy making process of states. This means that states act under the systemic directives unless there is an interruption from intervening variables. Thus, for the Iraq War to be explained with the independent variable, there should be enough evidence to prove that the system suggested a comprehensive attack against Iraq

It can be argued that the current literature on the grand strategy of the United States is simply an attempt to come up with a strategy that would be in line with the directiveness of the system. According to Colin Dueck, for a strategy to be called as “grand strategy”, three things should be observed: (1) Specification of national goals and interests, (2) specification of existing threats and/or challenges to these goals, (3) and a policy to follow to achieve them (Dueck 2017, 14-15). He further argues that ends and means should be matched and the commitments should not exceed the

capabilities and perceived interests (Dueck 2017, 15). Hence, first, one should define the goals and interests of the United States in the region. The second objective should be the specification of the threats that are perceived from Iraq to achieve these goals/interests. After detecting the goals/interests and threats, one should form a policy that minds the principle of equilibrium between ends and means.

It is argued that the main goal and interest of the United States in the region stem from oil, terrorism, and the prevention of Saddam to develop WMD. Realists argued that the main importance of the Persian Gulf is due to its roughly %30 of the world's oil production (Mearsheimer and Walt 2016, 72).

Today, the United States produces more oil than it imports. For instance, in 2018, the United States produced 14.61 million barrels of petroleum, consumed 19.63¹⁰ million barrels, imported 10.06 million barrels and even exported 5.19 million barrels of oil, which equals to the deficit of 5.02 million barrels (Energy Information Administration). Canada supplied %43 of these exports that the United States made in 2018. Saudi Arabia supplied only %9 of total US exports, and Iraq supplied as low as %5 (Energy Information Administration). Iraq, in terms of oil, is one of the richest countries in the world. According to the OPEC 2002 data, Iraq had the second-largest oil reserves on earth after Saudi Arabia (OPEC 1980-2004 Data). Thus, many argued that controlling the oil in the region was the main driving force of the United States. Hence, it can be argued that the United States' interest in the regions that have high energy resources is not for its own needs but for the need of others.

Walt and Mearsheimer argue that nations of the region hardly pose a considerable threat to the United States. They further argue that the main interest of

¹⁰ Historical high after 2008 economic crisis and just a million barrel behind from its historical high.

the United States lies in the oil reserves of the region and thus the United States should make sure that none of the nations in the region becomes a monopoly over the oil reserves of the region by themselves (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 18). That is why the United States acted immediately to confront Saddam when he attacked to Kuwait and stopped after emancipating Kuwait from Saddam (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 71). It was working until then and would mean much less commitment than going to war. Hence, rather than controlling and having the oil by itself, the real interest of the United States lies in the diversification (balance of power) of the control over the oil. Hence, the United States should make a direct commitment only if someone attempts to break the balance of power of the region, as it happened after Saddam's occupation of Kuwait. Toppling Saddam completely and breaking Iraq into pieces did not serve to this purpose at all, as Iran appeared as a bigger threat to Israel and to the United States in the absence of a strong Iraq to balance it. It was well known before the war and by the officials of Israel and the United States. That was why they raised their concerns regarding Iran, and some even suggested that Iran should be the primary target, and if not, it should be dealt with after Iraq (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 261-2).

9/11 terrorist attacks showed to the United States and the rest of the world that how vulnerable were they and what kind of threat that they were facing at the beginning of the 21st century. The perception of the threat after September 11 changed dramatically. This new perception paved the wave for a preemptive strike strategy of the United States, which is legitimized with the capabilities/potential of these non-state actors and rogue states. President Bush summarizes this new perception of the threat as follows;

The gravest danger to freedom lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology—when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our enemies have declared this very intention and have been caught seeking these terrible weapons. They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends—and we will oppose them with all our power (President Bush West Point, New York June 1, 2002).

Though the 9/11 terrorist attacks may seem quite irrelevant to the Iraq war of 2003, its affect cannot be overlooked. 9/1 attacks changed the perception of the threat, and this new perception led to the repositioning of Iraq. Page 14 of the National Security Strategy of 2002 clearly sets the path to follow for rogue states;

We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends (National Security Strategy of 2002, 14).

Although such strategies set the possible foreign policy options for the United States, it still does not tell us which way the United States will go. As discussed in the previous sections, this strategy does not tell us why the United States choose to go to war with Iraq but not with North Korea, who was another rogue state and who had a far more obvious and known nuclear program than Iraq. North Korean nuclear program was a mystery and could not be proven by the United Nations' field observers. Another rogue state Iran had an interest in nuclear power since 1950 and signed multiple agreements with other states regarding nuclear power and already invoke suspicion from outside in terms of uranium enrichment (Nuclear Threat Initiative, May 2018).

When it comes to security maximization, the main argument that neoconservatives put forward was the perception of threat that the United States perceived from WMD in general and nuclear weapons in particular, which increased dramatically after the traumatic terror attacks of 9/11. Another concern was the possibility of these rogue states to sell such weapons to terrorist organizations.

However, it is quite difficult to make the argument that Iraq had the potential or ever going to have the potential of hitting the United States with these weapons in the future. There exists more than 9.000 km distance between the closest piece of the mainland of the United States and Iraq. Even Iran, who has been enthusiastic about increasing its missile range for decades now, as of today, has a maximum of 2.500 km range (Armscontrol.org). Even with the actualization of nuclear weapons and adequate missile range, attacking the United States would mean a suicide mission. As many argued, before and after the war of 2003, trying to topple Saddam would only encourage him to attack the United States if he could do so. Also, when such concerns arose in the 1980s, Israel did not hesitate to bomb and dismantle the nuclear power plants of Iraq. Thus, preemptive war against Saddam can hardly be legitimized with such concerns.

“Bringing the Democracy” rhetoric was another legitimization that is used by the Bush administration that requires an examination. Claims of U.S. officials suggested that instability appears when authoritarian regimes combined with weak institutions. It is argued that such conditions may lead to the appearance and strengthening of terrorist organizations. Thus, it is argued that bringing democracy to not only Iraq but to the region in general, will eventually diminish terrorism, which was an obvious threat to the United States after 9/11. Cheney on August 26, 2002, argued that the elimination of authoritarian regimes will encourage the freedom-loving people of the region to promote democratic and peaceful values, which will also mean the elimination of threats to the United States (Cheney 26.08.2002). Bush made a similar statement on 26.02.2003 in which he argued that the people of free and liberal nations do not breed the ideologies of murder (The Guardian, 2003). However, these assumptions failed to be more than wishful thinking, which had no scientific ground

at all (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 256). Mearsheimer, in *The Great Delusion*, defined such behaviors as “liberal hegemony” and criticize such policies for being quite costly and almost impossible to be successful (Mearsheimer 2018, 144). Hence bringing democracy to these nations can hardly be seen as a part of a strategy that is directed by the system.

3.2.a.i. The Realist Grand Strategy and The Proper Commitment

According to Colin Dueck, the American grand strategy can be described as “reluctant-crusaders”. Dueck argues that the United States aims to promote liberal international order. However, Dueck also mentions that the United States has often acted reluctantly to achieve this goal due to the expansive and costly nature of the policy (Dueck 2006, 2). Mearsheimer agrees with the costly nature of such “liberal hegemonic” behaviors of the United States and argues that it stem from the “activist mentality” of the liberal hegemonic agenda (Mearsheimer 2018, 144).

Walt and Mearsheimer argue that the main interest of the United States in the region lies in the rich oil resources of the region. However, this does not mean that the United States should go to total war to control these reserves. What Walt and Mearsheimer suggest is that the United States should ensure the balance of power in the region, which means that no nation of the region should have the total control of the majority of oil resources. Walt and Mearsheimer argue that the best way to achieve this goal is to apply offshore balancing. They argue that offshore balancing is a proper commitment that can secure the national interest of the United States in the region. Moreover, if a situation like the occupation of Kuwait rises, the United States can

always step in to ensure the balance of power in the region (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 18).

Dueck summarizes the offshore balancing as follows;

...the United States would still try to ensure that no one country dominates Europe, Northeast Asia, or the Persian Gulf. But it would make others assume the main burden, and rely on local powers to balance one another, while stationing US military forces over the horizon—either offshore or within the United States. ...US armed forces would come onshore only once it appeared that regional powers could not maintain the balance themselves against a would-be hegemon (Dueck 2017, 20-1).

Not everyone welcomed the strategy of Bush administration in general and strategy for Iraq in particular. Bush's successor Barack Obama, for instance, made the following statement;

I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars ...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 (Barack Obama, October 2002).

Then democratic Senator from Vermont and later presidential candidate in 2016 and 2020 (Democratic Primaries) Bernie Sanders stated that Saddam did not pose an imminent threat to the United States. Sanders further argued that the United States should not engage in unilateral action against Iraq, which would raise suspicion and give the same right to other nations like China and Russia (Sanders speech at the Senate 9.10.2002).

National Security advisor of George H.W. Bush, Brent Scowcroft wrote an article to Wallstreet Journal on August 15, 2002, in which he argued that an attack on Iraq would seriously jeopardize the war on terror process that was going on with the coalition of various nations (Scowcroft 15.08.2002). He also argued that the war against Iraq would divert the United States from its main objective, which was the war against terrorism.

Many argued that the real reason for the war against Iraq was the oil. However, there exists almost no proof to support that the United States go to war with Iraq to control its oil reserves. Also, if it is about controlling and confiscating the oil resources, Saudi Arabia would have been a better choice with its smaller population and greater oil reserves. Also, bin Laden and the 15 out of 19 terrorists who attack the United States on September eleven were originated from Saudi Arabia, and none of them were from Iraq (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 254). Hence, under the framework of the fight against terrorism, there existed not only enough incentive to attack Saudi Arabia but it was also more logical if it was to be a war for oil.

In order for us to explain the decision to go to war with Iraq with systemic variables, there needed to be tangible proofs showing that the decision was going to serve the national interest and security of the United States and such a commitment would match the outcome. This thesis argues that proper commitment against Saddam would have been the directiveness of offshore balancing. Thus, from a structural realist perspective, the Iraq War of 2003 was an unnecessary and costly initiative. It did not only cost so much, but it also led the attention to move from the real threat. In other words, commitment exceeds the perceived gains. Also, since Iraq could have been easily contained, launching a war appears as an unnecessary move that triggered suspicion against the United States and possible balancing strategies by other nations (Schmidt and Williams 2002).

3.2.b. Analysis of Prestige Seeking as Intervening Variable

Bush doctrine is quite important to understand the process that led to the decision to launch a war against Iraq, which can be seen as the tool for paving the way to the war.

Before he was elected as the president of the United States, Bush was defending a humble foreign policy that would not provoke others to unite against the United States. He promised a non-provocative foreign policy path during his campaign process of 2000 and arguably achieved to perform what he promised until 9/11. He confessed in an interview later that he never wanted to have a presidency that he had, which was occupied with one war and another (George W. Bush: The 9/11 Interview 2011). In the same interview, he mentioned that 9/11 had changed his presidency considerably. It can be argued that the foreign policy of the Bush administration experienced a sharp change after 9/11, which paved the way for the National Security Strategy of 2002, which shaped the Bush doctrine. Jervis argues that the Bush doctrine has its four elements: (1) importance of state's domestic regime in determining the foreign policy, (2) preventive war that is essential to overcome serious threats, (3) acting unilaterally if necessary, (4) importance of primacy of the United States to sustain peace and stability in the world (Jervis 2003, 365). This was quite contrary to what Bush promised during his campaign.

Although the effects of 9/11 on American foreign policy cannot be overlooked, the effects of the Bush administration and its characteristics also need mentioning. Clinton administration for instance, though approved the "Iraq Liberation Act of 1998", which even includes the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and assistance to Iraqi parties and support of movements to achieve this goal (Iraq Liberation Act of 1998), did very little to implement the hectoring directives of the act. President Bush, before 9/11, was not advocating any use of force against Saddam Hussein as well. Instead, he built his campaign on a "humble" foreign policy path, which he conducted as such until 9/11. However, this did not mean that Iraq was not a concern for President Bush and his administration before 9/11. After the elections,

Vice president Cheney requested a special and detailed briefing on Iraq for the president-elect (Woodward 2004, 13). According to Woodward, Cheney saw Iraq as unfinished business and want the president to be aware of the subject and to discuss different policies (Woodward 2004, 13). Bush, three years later from the briefing, mentioned in an interview that he was not happy with the pre 9/11 policy of the United States towards Iraq. He argued that the policy was not effective enough to change the behavior of Saddam Hussein (Woodward 2004, 14). However, he was aware that Iraq was not a top priority for the United States before 9/11. In another follow up national security briefing, Bush, Rice, and Cheney were convinced that there existed 3 major threats to the National Security of the United States. These threats were; Bin Laden, who was operating from Afghanistan, weapons of mass destruction, and finally the rise of China, which was not an immediate concern for at least 5 years (Woodward 2004, 15). Though Iraq is not considered as a major concern, WMD indirectly is to be used as a legitimization of Iraq as a threat to American national security.

Bush and Rice, prior to 9/11, were not happy with the degree of commitment of the United States in Iraq. They asked questions like “what is the purpose of no-fly zones” and “does it worth it”, as a result, they decided to decrease the frequency of sorties and increase the degree of retaliation to ensure fewer casualties for American troops (Woodward 2004, 15). This behavior of Bush shows the lack of interest of the President to make more committing to Iraq.

Woodward argued that the mastermind of the plan for toppling Saddam Hussein was no other than the Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. Wolfowitz was the son of an immigrant of the polish/Jewish family, who had a Ph.D. from Political Science and who is part of the neoconservative “coalition” (Woodward 2004, 19). His argument for the justification of the war against Iraq was rather odd; he

argued that it was crucial and would not be as difficult as some thought (Woodward 2004, 19). Wolfowitz's suggestion came just a couple of months before the attacks of 9/11 and not welcomed by Powell, who thought the plan of Wolfowitz was absurd. As a result, Powell advised the president that he should not be pushed by such a suggestion unless there exists a real reason. Powell also added that what Wolfowitz offering was much more complicated and difficult than the way it is presented (Woodward 2004, 20). Woodward explains the approach of the administration between this suggestion and 9/11 as such;

Most work on Iraq stopped for the rest of August as Bush and his top advisers left for vacation. A policy recommendation on Iraq was never forwarded to the president. The deep divisions and tensions in the war cabinet with Powell the moderate negotiator and Rumsfeld the hard-line activist meant no real policy would be made until either the president stepped in or events forced his hand (Woodward 2004, 20).

Immediate post 9/11 era made it clear that Bush was going to be the president of “war”. War against Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan failed to convince Americans that justice has been served for the perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In the very early days of the war, polls were showing that %72 percent of the population of the United States believed that the decision to use force against Iraq was the right choice, and only %22 percent believed that it was the not (Pewresearch 2008).

2004 presidential elections were approaching, and Bush’s approval ratings were falling as low as to 57 percent from its historical record of 90 percent that reached after the 9/11 attacks (Gallup 2009). This approval rate also shows why Bush had to become “war president”. His approval ratings immediately jumped to 71 percent just after the landing of first American troops to Iraq (Gallup 2009). It was already known that public approval for the war against Iraq was its historical high after 9/11 (Pewresearch 2008).

Iraq had always been a usual target for President Bush in particular and for the United States in general. This mainly stems from Saddam's aggression against Kuwait in 1990, its previous attempts to build suspicious nuclear power plants, and the constant tension between two nations due to air patrols of the United States in Iraq. His constant attacks on U.S. warplanes in the region contributed to the process. It always grasps the attention of the Bush not only due to these facts but also due to constant pressure from his neoconservative chief executives. Max Boot describes these executives as follows;

Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense; Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy; Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the vice president's chief of staff; Elliott Abrams, the National Security Council staffer for Near East, Southwest Asian, and North African Affairs; and Richard Perle, a member of the Defense Policy Board (Boot 2009).

When the above-mentioned facts and constant pressure from neoconservatives combined with favoring public opinion, there appears to be very little room for indecision for going to war with Iraq. After that point, President Bush was alone to convince himself for the unnecessary of the war.

As discussed in previous sections, Iraq had always been on the agenda, and after 9/11 Bush already stated that he was to return to the issue of Iraq after Afghanistan, which he did. Just a year after 9/11, Public Law for the authorization for the use of military force against Iraq approved by Congress. Though Iraq had always been on the table, Bush never thought to go into a total war against Iraq. He constantly stated that he was to follow a humble foreign policy to not to attract aggression against the United States. Many executives constantly stated that going to war with Iraq would diminish and harm the coalition that had been formed after 9/11, which played a role in the selection of Afghanistan as the prior target.

Hardly anything changed, other than perception, towards Iraq after 9/11. When

the president first came into power, officials briefed the president about three major threats to the National Security of the United States and none of them directly pointed Iraq as the main threat (Woodward 2004, 15). Weapons of mass destruction had always been a threat to the security of the United States. It was not new, and Iraq has never been considered as the most dangerous one, among others.

To conclude, there exists no substantial proof to support that the president went to war with Iraq for the prestige and status seeking of his own. Also, there existed not much synergy for Iraq in the Senate, House and the Public as there was for Afghanistan. Hence, further examination of other domestic factors is needed to make sense of the decision of going to war with Iraq.

3.2.c. Analysis of Interest Groups as Intervening Variable: Neoconservatives and the Israel Lobby

Arguably the most obvious proof regarding the level of influence on the decision-making process for the war can be found in neoconservatives and Israel lobby. To understand the neoconservative logic, one should look at the Bush doctrine and thus to the National Security Strategy of 2002 (Schmidt and Williams 195). It can be argued that the fundamentals and justification of the War laid in 2002 NSS. As mentioned in previous sections, Bush doctrine consist of the following four elements: (1) importance of domestic regime in determining the foreign policy, (2) preventive war, (3) unilateralism, (4) importance of primacy of the United States to sustain peace and stability in the world (Jervis 2003, 365).

The term neoconservative first appeared as an anathema in the 1970s. It was referring to a group of former liberals that were separated from their old friends.

Neoconservatives share the same values and even the same goals of liberalism such as peace and racial equality. Nevertheless, neoconservatives argued that liberal policies like disarmament and positive action for racial equality were damaging the main goals of liberalism rather than contributing to the progress of achieving them. Thus, these people described themselves as the foes of the contemporary liberalism (Muravchik 2007).

It is repeatedly argued that neoconservatives were largely the ones that were responsible for the war decision of the United States towards Iraq (Fukuyama 2006, 12). This was used in 2004 elections by Democratic Party candidate Howard Dean who blamed the Bush government for being imprisoned by neoconservatives (Fukuyama 2006 12). Also, some commentators indicated that there existed many Jewish proponents that have a considerable rank in the decision-making mechanisms of the Bush government. Wolfowitz, Feith, and Perle were the usual suspects all of whom were Jewish. This led to speculations for the original aim of the war of 2003 (Fukuyama 2006, 12). Fukuyama went even further to argue that the word neoconservatism was a code word that was used to cover the word Jew (Fukuyama 2006, 13). War against Iraq and the policies that followed it led neoconservatives to deny the existence of such a classification (Fukuyama 2006, 13). Neoconservative, unlike liberalism or socialism, referred to a group of people with similar decisions and votes. These people started to shape the policies of the United States, which led to a need for a name to make the distinction between these people and others.

Walt and Mearsheimer argued that, although many elements affected the decision to go to war with Iraq, there exists another variable; without it, it would not be possible. They call this variable/element as the “Israel lobby,” which located in a group of neoconservative decision makers and were pushing Bush to go to war with

Iraq before and after the terror attacks of 9/11 (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007, 230).

Then Secretary of State John Kerry reminded Americans in February of 2015 that how Netanyahu, then was a private citizen, visited the United States in 2002 to lobby for the favor of intervention towards Iraq (NYT 2015). Netanyahu visited the Congress and gave a testimony, in which he argued that there was no question whatsoever for Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons development. He further argued that the United States must destroy the Saddam regime to avoid a nuclear armed Saddam, which, he argued, would endanger the security of the entire world. He went even further to argue that the nuclear arm Saddam would also mean nuclear arm terrorist organizations (Testimony of Netanyahu 2002).

Israeli officials showed their impatience for the process of the UNSC and the UN's weapons inspection team (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006, 29). Then Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres said that the war against Saddam Hussein was a necessity, and inspections would not work on dishonest people. Peres argued that Saddam could easily cheat during these inspections (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006, 30). Former Prime Minister Barak wrote that the greatest risk lies in passivity as the time works for Saddam (NYT 2002). Almost all high ranked executives of Israeli government made open statements about the necessity of launching a war and dismantling the regime of Saddam and show their unrest regarding the UNSC process.

If we are to argue that a group of Jewish lobbyists within the framework of neoconservatives are partly or greatly responsible for the war of 2003, then the description of the lobby is also a necessity for the sake of the argument. It can be argued that the Israel lobby here refers to a coalition of people and organizations who work together or separately to shape the American foreign policy in their desired way

(Walt and Mearsheimer 2006, 13). Although these people may aim to achieve similar outcomes it does not mean that these individuals and organizations always work together and act as a unitary organization with leadership and defined layout. Although these individuals and organizations are mostly Jewish or reinforced by them, it does not automatically mean that every Jew is part of the lobby. Walt and Mearsheimer argue that more than 1 out of 3 Jewish Americans do not feel attached to Israel at all (Walt and Mearsheimer 2006, 13).

Israel had always seen Iraq as a hostile state. It was the very reason that they conducted the history's first preemptive strike against a nuclear facility on June 7, 1981 (Feldman 1982, 114). This attack shows how much threat did Israel perceived from Iraq and how long its concern for a nuclear Iraq goes back to. Indeed Israeli concerns were not hollow as Feldman argues, Iraq's decision to build nuclear facility was quite suspicious due to five factors; (1) its purchase of non-economical yet plutonium producing gas graphite reactor, (2) purchase of 70 MW testing reactor, (3) its persistence to use 92 percent enriched uranium instead of less enriched uranium, (4) its 250 tons of natural uranium purchase which is meaningless if not used for plutonium production and finally (5) its purchase of plutonium separation simulator from Italy (Feldman 1982, 115). Hence, it can be argued that the Israeli concerns and arguments were not completely imaginative, and they indeed perceived a threat from Iraq. During the First Gulf War Israel was quite enthusiastic about the war against Saddam not for the emancipation of Kuwait but to topple Saddam Hussein and to ensure that its nuclear program was dismantled (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 233). However, this still does not explain why the United States carried out a complete and comprehensive war against Iraq just to make Israel a bit more secure. These concerns and threat perception of Israel is supporting the argument that the war was about

making Israel more secure and against the interest/security of the United States.

Nevertheless, it is also difficult to argue that the war of Iraq was in complete favor of Israel. Although Israel perceived quite a serious threat from Saddam, they also perceive a threat from Iran and Syria as well. Hence, when the United States decided to go to war with Iraq, Israel was worried about Iran and Syria. Thus, they were hoping for an intervention to these nations after they are done with Iraq (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 234). Thus, although Israel lobby pushed for intervention towards Saddam, it is arguable that they conducted the war and the aftermath of the region.

Although Israeli officials and their ally neoconservatives were pro-war, Jews of America were hardly in favor of it. On the contrary, Jews in the United States were 10% less supportive of the Iraq War when compared with the rest of the population (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 243). However, it should not be forgotten that more than two thirds of the American Jews felt unaffiliated to Israel. Hence, rather than focusing on a specific religious group, it makes more sense to focus on Israel as a country that has supporters and connections within the United States. Their leverages on American politics strengthens its ability to influence the foreign policy making process of the United States.

Neoconservative effort for the use of force against Iraq goes back to Clinton administration Schmidt and Williams points out some of the influential names as follows;

...members of the Project for a New American Century, which included influential neoconservatives such as William Kristol, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Lewis "Scooter" Libby, sent an open letter to President Clinton in January 1998 advocating a military strategy of regime change in Iraq (Schmidt and Williams, 193).

Though the effort of neoconservatives goes back, these people could not find a proper

ground to influence the president back then. Also, the condition of Iraq back then was more or less stable. Iraq, every now and then, was firing to American jets, and the United States was retaliating.

Neo-conservatives found quite a space in the executive body and small meetings of the Bush administration, which contributed to their ability to influence the president and his administration. However, they failed to convince the president for the use of force against Iraq before 9/11. Quite the contrary president and C. Rice agreed upon reducing the number of jets making sorties in Iraq's airspace to reduce the casualties.

Mearsheimer and Walt argue that the Israel lobby also had a significant role in the decision-making process of using force against Iraq. Israel lobby does not only consist of people from Israel or Jews in the United States, but the term "Israel lobby" includes (or its effect includes) considerable portion of neoconservatives, advisors, and other politicians in the Congress. In addition to its political influence, it also makes sure that there exists no anti-Israeli public opinion in the United States. Israel lobby funds newspapers, TV channels, academia, and even the best well known think tanks;

...key elements in the lobby strive to influence discourse about Israel in the media, think tanks, and academia, because these institutions are critical to shaping popular opinion. They promote efforts to portray Israel in a positive light and they go to considerable lengths to marginalize anyone who questions Israel's past or present conduct or seeks to cast doubt on the merits of unconditional U.S. backing (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 168).

As Walt and Mearsheimer stated, anyone who tries to publish or publicly gives a speech has the potential of hurting the image of Israel and the unquestionable partnership and support towards Israel. These people are blocked, before he/she reaches to the public, by editors, or they are marginalized, which ensures that nobody relies on the statements of such people. Even the article that has been requested from

the publisher to be written by Walt and Mearsheimer was rejected when they send the draft to the publisher that asked them to write a piece regarding Israel lobby in the first place. Few other publishers rejected the paper as well (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, Preface).

Israel lobby went even further to ensure the public support for Israel by making sure of evangelical Christians¹¹ are also in support of Israeli case in Palestine. Those so-called Christian Zionists support Israel and its claims over Palestine for the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Bible¹². Chairman of CUFI¹³, pastor John Hagee said that “supporting Israel is not a political issue... it is a bible issue” (Pri.org 2016).

Israel lobby not only ensures that there exists no resistance from the public for the support of Israel in the Middle East, but it also ensures that the public supports the protection of Israel proactively if necessary. This control over public opinion enables lobby to influence politicians more effectively and easily. Since there exists no resistance from the public, politicians feel (personally) that they have almost nothing to lose by supporting the issues that favor Israel.

Political logic that neoconservatives and Israel lobby use for the American commitments in the Middle East and to Israel consist of the partnership against terrorism and prevention of rogue state to acquire WMD (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 70). Walt and Mearsheimer argue that the decision to go to war against Iraq in 2003, to some degree, is materialized due to initiatives that the Israel lobby took (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 230-1).

¹¹ Evangelical Christians appears as the biggest religious group in the United States with around %25 of the population (Pew Research Center)

¹² They believe that Palestine should be ruled by Jews to ensure the resurgence of Christ.

¹³ Christians United for Israel is a religious Union with more than 3 million members.

The argument of Walt and Mearsheimer is beyond speculation because there exist statements from Israeli officials themselves that support the argument. For instance, Philip Zelikow, counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and member of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board of President Bush argued that Saddam was not a real threat to the United States. It is further argued that the real threat was against Israel. It is possible to find similar statements from commanders, senators and many other public figures (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 231-2). Some journalists also started to establish the links between Israel and hostility of the U.S. towards Iraq before the war. Nathan Guttman, just a few weeks before 9/11, wrote that there was a deliberate effort to avoid links between Israel and future military conflict between the United States and Iraq (Guttman 05.03.2003).

Though it was the neoconservatives that play the initial role of convincing the president for a war against Iraq, Israeli officials like Netanyahu and Shimon Peres and Israel lobby in the United States made every effort to convince the President for the same. Lobby ensured this by manipulating the public and political bodies like the Senate and the House (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 234). Netanyahu, for instance, visited the Congress on September 12, 2002, and gave a speech about Iraq, in which he argued that there exists no question whatsoever for Saddam's nuclear development (Netanyahu 2002, speech in Senate). Peres in May of 2002 argued on CNN that Saddam was as dangerous as bin Laden (FP 08.02.2010). He further argued that Saddam was on its way to acquire nuclear weapons. To conclude, Israeli officials and lobby was using every channel to convince the public and politicians in the United States that Iraq was a major threat to U.S. security. It can be argued that they achieved their goal given that %72 of the population was favoring the use of military force against Iraq (03.03.2003 Pew Research Center).

Walt and Mearsheimer argued that following officials and journalist were the most enthusiastic people that had the influence in the Bush administration regarding using force against Iraq;

...Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, ...Richard Perle, Kenneth Adelman, and James Woolsey, members of the influential Defense Policy Board; Scooter Libby, the vice president's chief of staff; John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, and his special assistant, David Wurmser; and Elliott Abrams, ...It also included ...journalists like Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, William Kristol, and William Safire (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 239).

For instance, when Paul Wolfowitz appointed as the deputy defense secretary, Jerusalem Post wrote that Jews and pro-Israeli circles were jumping with joy. Wolfowitz, in the same article, named as a person that is “devoutly pro-Israel” (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 239). After all, he was the son of a Jewish/Polish immigrant family, and his statements were quite pro-Israel. Wolfowitz's obsession with Iraq and the pressure that he made in small group meetings, for the use of force against Iraq, has already mentioned in the previous sections.

Douglas Feith served as the undersecretary of Defense for Policy under Bush administration between 2001 and 2005 thanks to the recommendation of Donald Rumsfeld (Feith 2009, 22). However, Rumsfeld did not know Feith at all. It was the members of Congress and other officials like; Jon Kyl, Paul Wolfowitz, Frank Gaffney Fred Ikle, Richard Perle were the ones who suggested Feith to Rumsfeld (Feith 2009, 22). Douglas Feith's family was also a Jewish/Polish-German immigrant (Feith 2009, 23). Who had close ties with the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs and the Zionist Organization of America (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 239). Feith studied International relations at Harvard. He never believed the policies of appeasement and containment of totalitarian governments with legal agreements and international law (Feith 2009, 24). He confesses in his book that he always believed that Iraq should be

included in the war against terrorism. He argued that Iraq was not only supporting terrorism but also constantly attacking the American and British air Patrols (Feith 2009, 48).

Ahmad blames Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld for his lack of foreign policy experience. He argues that neoconservatives like Feith, Chalabi, Wolfowitz, and Richard Perle were the main brains behind Rumsfeld's foreign policy stand (Ahmad 2014, 109). Just a few hours after the attacks, Perle gave a statement to the press and argued that Iraq could be the one behind the attacks (Ahmad 2014, 109). Just a couple of hours after the attacks, Michael Ledeen wrote an article to the *National Review*. In which he blamed realists for not taking the necessary action of toppling Saddam after defeating him in Kuwait in 1991 (Ahmad 2014, 109).

Perle arranged a session at Pentagon on the 19th of September to discuss the threat of Iraq, in which both Wolfowitz and Feith attended the meeting while the State Department is ignored (Ahmad 2014, 113). The session was basically about arguments regarding bypassing Afghanistan and putting Iraq first to the agenda and raising the concern for a Saddam that is armed with WMD (Ahmad 2014, 113).

John Bolton, who served as the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs and later as the U.S. Ambassador to the United states, was another controversial figure that supported the unilateral and preemptive actions of the United States. He did not only push for a preemptive war against Iraq, but he also pushes the same for North Korea and Iran (Business insider 10.10.2019). He also supported Israel in various matters during his mission at the U.N. (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 240).

Some of these so called “neoconservatives” had significant ties with pro-Israeli

organizations (Walt and Mearsheimer 2007, 241) that, after some point, it becomes quite meaningless to make a distinction between these two groups. Some of the people like Wolfowitz and Feith, for instance, were devoted Jews and had strong relations with pro-Jewish organizations and groups. Feith's father, who lost most of his family during the holocaust, attempted to settle in Palestine. However, when the British decline his application he found himself in the United States (Feith 2009, 24). When there exist such strong connections, one can go as far as to evaluate that loyalty of some of the officials lies more in Israel than the United States.

Though indications are suggesting that the Iraq war was more in favor of Israel than it is for the United States, it is almost impossible to prove that these people acted for the interest of Israel and put the interest of Israel above the interest of the United States. They might indeed act with the belief that war against Iraq would serve to the best interest of both nations. As Walt and Mearsheimer point out, the persistence of neoconservative officials and the efforts of the Israel lobby were not the only reasons for the war against Iraq. However, one can argue that the war would not have happened if there existed no pressure from these groups.

3.2.d. Analysis of Coalition Logrolling as Intervening Variable

Coalition logrolling behavior for using force against Iraq can be seen in many political events after 9/11. Senate, House, and small group meetings of the executives are the most important ones. Also, the coalition of interest groups and their connection with politicians represent a good example of how these groups can be effective and actualize the coalition logrolling behavior in political bodies.

Resolution 114 introduced to the House on 02.10.2002, which was about the

authorization for the use of military force against Iraq. Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Capital just a couple of weeks before the resolution introduced to the Congress and even gave a speech in the Congress before the voting of the Resolution (Netanyahu speech at Congress 12.10.2002). A few weeks later, both the House and Senate voted in favor of the Resolution with considerable support from Democratic Senators and Congressmen (Gov track). Even 2004 presidential candidate John Kerry voted in favor of the authorization in Senate, who was quite critical of the war during the presidential debates of 2004. Though a considerable number of Congressmen raised their concerns for the authorization and voted “Nay”¹⁴, Resolution passed with safe numbers. Two of the later democratic presidential candidates Kerry and Hillary Clinton voted “Yea” another later republican presidential candidate John McCain voted “Yea” as well. Hillary Clinton received enormous donations from Israeli and Jewish businessmen and organizations some of which supported her since her service as a Senator. During her campaign, she constantly stated that if she was to be elected, the United States was to reaffirm the security of Israel (Forbes 27.03.2016). John Kerry, whose 3 out of 4 grandparents were Jewish, though was critical of war during the 2004 campaign also received considerable donations from Jews (Learn Religions 01.26.2019). When McCain died in 2018, many Israeli leaders praised him for being a true friend and supporter of Israel (Time of Israel 26.08.2018). In short, most of the Senators and the Representatives that have supported and voted “Yea” for the Resolution 114, were backed and supported by the Israel lobby.

The picture above can be seen as the definition of coalition logrolling. Many of the Congressmen had very little or nothing to lose (personally) by giving a “Yea”. If there is to be a war, as a result of this authorization in the future, it would hardly be

¹⁴ 77 to 23 in Senate and 296 to 133 in Congress.

their fault in the eyes of a standard American. In addition to the absence of perceived loses, they can even be benefited by giving a “Yea”, the lobby can reward them by funding their next election, or they can lobby in favor of the next desired legislation in both the Senate and the House.

Coalition in the executive body is also quite important. Resolutions like 114 are introduced by the administration rather than the House or the Senate, and even if these bodies introduce and approve the legislation as such, the president has the power to veto them. In case of the process that led to the decision to go to war with Iraq, the coalition of neoconservatives and Israel lobby constitutes the core of the issue for the executive branch.

Both Cheney and Rumsfeld, for instance, were non-Jewish neoconservatives that served under President Bush. Cheney, for instance, just a few days after 9/11, at Camp David, advised to President not to target Saddam first. Nevertheless, he added that they should go after him at some point. Wolfowitz, who worked under Cheney in George H.W. Bush administration and who suggested by him to Rumsfeld argued that Iraq should be the first target. Rumsfeld, on the other hand, was not sure whether to attack Bin Laden or Saddam first or to both at the same time (Woodward 2004, 22-23). Though many agreed-upon attacking Taliban and al Qaeda first, very few rejected the idea of attacking Iraq, at some point, as a response to 9/11 (Woodward 2004, 23). Though the decision is made for attacking Afghanistan first, President also gave order to Rumsfeld to work on a plan for attacking Iraq in the future (Woodward 2004, 22).

In addition to the coalition of neoconservatives and Israel lobby, since many argued that the war was about oil, lobby for oil also requires an examination. Antonia Juhasz wrote an article to CNN in 2013, in which he argued that the oil of Iraq was

entirely nationalized under Saddam administration. He further argued that the considerable portion of the oil industry becomes privatized after the war, and British and U.S. firms mainly dominate it;

In 2000, Big Oil, including Exxon, Chevron, BP and Shell, spent more money to get fellow oilmen Bush and Cheney into office than they had spent on any previous election. Just over a week into Bush's first term, their efforts paid off when the National Energy Policy Development Group, chaired by Cheney, was formed, bringing the administration and the oil companies together to plot our collective energy future. In March, the task force reviewed lists and maps outlining Iraq's entire oil productive capacity (Juhasz CNN 2013).

Relationships in the executive body were so interwoven that, after some point, it becomes quite difficult to track who was against attacking Iraq or was there anyone at all. All these neoconservative executives and advisors had similar views regarding what American foreign policy should be after 9/11, which can be found in the Bush Doctrine. Moreover, almost no one rejected attacking Saddam at some point after 9/11. This lack of resistance within the administration may have driven the president to believe that attacking Iraq after Afghanistan is not a bad idea and might be in the best interest of the United States. Also, the donation-based election system of the United States is quite problematical and raises concerns for the manipulation power of these donators. Both oil and Israel related people, circles and businesses invested a considerable amount of money to people that were in favor of the war and who assumed roles in executive and legislative bodies of the United States. It is, to some degree, obvious that the different interest groups were favoring a war against Iraq. However, their degree of effectiveness still requires an examination for the measurement of the effectiveness of coalition logrolling behavior for the process that led to the decision to go to war with Iraq.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, I argued that the American foreign policy towards Iraq after 9/11 exceeded the directives of the system, which suggested the policy of offshore balancing as the proper commitment. This meant that the Iraq war of 2003 constitutes the behavior of over-commitment. In this chapter, I will discuss which one of the intervening variables appears as more related to the explanation of the underlying cause of over-commitment behavior.

There exists very little evidence showing that the United States go to war with Iraq for the sake of prestige. To argue that the decision to go to war with Iraq stems from the prestige concerns of the President, there must be tangible proofs to support that the president acted with the incentive of preserving/seeking the prestige of his own. It can be argued that President Bush felt the need to act after 9/11 not because to sustain its prestige as “war president” but because of his cabinet, high ranked advisors, public opinion, and the myth-making process that made the president believe that the war against Iraq was a necessity. Thus, one can claim that not acting could have damaged the prestige of Bush and his administration more severely than the outcomes of the war did. It can be argued that the prestige played a role, given that not acting after 9/11 and not showing any results would have led to a decrease in the popularity of the administration. The war against terror in Afghanistan delivered quite little results, and it became quite costly to resume the fight in the mountains. 2004 general elections were approaching, and it was obvious that there was not yet any substantial victory in the war against terror. However, as process tracing shows, Bush was not

quite enthusiastic about toppling Saddam even after 9/11. This points to the influence of interest groups and coalition logrolling behavior rather than the prestige seeking of the president.

It can be argued that in order for a single interest group to be the main reason for the over-commitment behavior, observance of a state capture like behavior is needed. State capture can enable such groups to control the entire process and the level of commitment for a certain foreign policy matter. The Israel lobby and neoconservative officials were quite pro-war and used their leverage to make the President believe that Iraq should be a top priority. However, it is difficult to argue that any one of the interest groups took the wheel and control the situation by themselves. Instead, it is more accurate to argue that formal, informal, intentional, and unintentional coalition of various interest groups contributed to the decision of the President to go to war with Iraq. To accuse any single interest group with “state capture,” we must be certain of their ability to control the situation on their behalf. As discussed earlier, invading Iraq, though supported by Israel lobby and neoconservatives, following policies of the United States did not favor the interest groups. They fail to control the flow of the war and the aftermath of the region in their favor not because things went wrong during the war but because they were incapable of intervening in the process. They fail to convince the president and his successors to take the follow-up action against Iran that would make the war of Iraq meaningful. Thus, it would not be wrong to argue that the efforts of a single interest group, contributed to the decision to go to war but was inadequate of controlling the situation, process, and post-war strategies.

To conclude, coalition logrolling as an intervening variable appears to be the most explanatory one when compared with the state capture and prestige seeking

behaviors. The process that led to the decision to go to war and the aftermath of war reveals that none of the interest groups succeeded in capturing the control and forming a policy that would serve to their best interest. However, their pressure towards politicians and executives contributed to the President's decision to go to war with Iraq. Snyder argues that the over-expansion behaviors of states do not stem from their separate actions but through their coalition, which can lead to the justification and importance of their preferred policies (Snyder 1994, 17). Snyder, in *Myths of Empire*, argued that such coalition logrolling behaviors almost always resulted in a commitment that exceeds the preferred commitment of any individual group (Snyder 1994, 17). It would be wrong to evaluate Iraq as an independent foreign policy matter. It should be assessed within the contexts of the balance of power of the Middle East not only for the United States but also for Israel as well. As mentioned earlier, the main interest of the United States in the Middle East lies in the rich oil reserves of the region, which should be secured by the preservation of balance in the region. The same can be argued for Israel as well. Since the absence of a balance of power can lead to a regional hegemon, the absence of a strong Iraq to balance Iran can be evaluated as a worsening scenario for Israel as well.

Selling myths for a single interest group is rather difficult. Though one of them can contribute more to the process of mythmaking than others, their sole attempts may raise doubts for the public, politicians, and executives (Snyder 1994, 17). If supporters of the war against Iraq were to be the Israeli and American Jewish circles only, it would most probably lead decision makers and the public to approach the issue with suspicion. For the case of Iraq, not only Israel lobby but also many neoconservatives, reporters, and academicians contributed to the process of mythmaking. Also, the traumatic atmosphere of post-9/11 conjecture helped such a myth to found ground not

only in public but also in the executive body. Hence, the coalition logrolling behavior appears as more explanatory for the American foreign policy towards Iraq after 9/11 than the other two intervening variables.



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