



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات  
ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES

RESEARCH PAPERS

# The Bush II Years In the Middle East (2000–2008): Morals and Interests

A Case Study

In the sociology of international relations

Dr. Hichem Karoui | July, 2012

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A Case Study In the sociology of international relations

Series: RESEARCH PAPERS

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## Abstract

Based on the results of a research covering the eight years of the Bush administration (2000-2008), we may from the outset assert that whenever the materialistic interests engaged in fierce conflict with the moral ideology preached by the Bush team, materialistic interests triumphed. Furthermore, these *interests* represent the ins and outs of the general policy of the Bush administration. Thus, the real motive behind Bush policy is not related to an ethical vision but rather confined to materialistic interests.

This introductory chapter aims to explore the problems posed by a systematic approach to the US foreign policy in the Middle East. It will emphasize the use of microsociology and macrosociology tools... Goffman's interactionism, Parsons' functionalism, and other methodological instruments for the analysis of political Action with respect to US foreign policy in general and to the Bush administration in particular.

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## Introduction\*

From the outset, a first statement emerged out of this research: whenever the talk is about American foreign policy, connected to the Middle East<sup>(1)</sup> or not, connected to the Bush administration or not, two points are clear, and our task is partly to demonstrate their importance and relevance to our topic:

- 1: US Foreign policy can be described as an “*extension*” of the *public policy* of the nation, in the sense that it responds primarily to the first economic, social, and political needs of the American nation, regardless of its influences and its tributaries. This means that it is not independent, even if it is autonomous.

- 2: It is impossible to understand anything, if we ignore the enormous and crucial contribution of money, which is divided broadly into *two types: electoral contributions*, intended not only as support for one candidate against the rival, but also for getting the “booty” of the post-election campaign in various forms: contracts for businesses, facilities, and positions of power for individuals. *Lobbying funds*, aimed at supporting some interests and encouraging politicians to take certain decisions that will benefit the lobbies.

These two points seem highly important, and that is why, in order to understand the Bush policy in the Middle East, we will try to explore them, based on a corpus of theoretical and practical analyses of networks and connections, the whole linked to a key question: *are interests always compatible with morality?*

We do not raise this issue in a monograph concerned with the Bush administration policy in the Middle East by chance: the whole edifice of the Bush doctrine, as we shall see, is based on the cornerstone emphasizing, “political life must be moralized.” Therefore, the policy of the nation is supposed to be at the service of an ideal suggested by the highest human values of Western civilization. If the “moralization of politics” came to support the arguments of the neocons, the latter actually target a higher goal, which we may call “moral consensus” or “elite consensus.” However, in the real world (not that of the ideas,) things may sometimes have different ways. Indeed,

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\* This is Chapter One in a 250.000 words’ monograph that ACRPS will publish in Arabic as a book. The Arabic version of this chapter is published online here : <http://www.dohainstitute.org/release/3866f15c-eb2-48ea-8f5e-efedca765729>

<sup>1</sup> No political significance should be induced from our use of the concept «Middle East ». This is just for convenience. We dedicate a whole chapter to a critical analysis of this concept and others (like Near East, related to the region).

Ideas contribute to the making of the real world, but when it comes to international relations, inter-State relations and strategy of a global hyper-power, it would be naive to believe that conflicts have for only cause and purpose to make ideas and values accepted. History is also a narrative about interests, class struggles, fight between nations, and perhaps even between civilizations, as Huntington suggests.

Moreover, when one observes the American policy in the Middle East, one also observes at once *the networks linked to oil, natural gas, and giant financial investments*, acting within a globalized economy. Besides, we are living at a time of crisis, questioning and doubts. Admittedly, the value system of the twenty-first century's man is no longer that of the man of the Middle Ages: it has evolved. But the problems involved in human action are still almost the same: is it a coincidence that Mr. Bush mentioned the fight against the *axis of evil*? Is it a coincidence that certain actors or observers in the Middle East talked about "new crusades?"

Ethics and religion intersect in this century on a background of a conflict of interests: you can justify anything if you are convinced that you work for the general good. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, as they say. That is the tragedy. It is therefore inevitable to ask, what was driving Mr. Bush to this policy? First possible hypothesis: oil, money, economic factors, private and collective gains, the lure of huge contracts, etc... However, is this really explaining everything? Here, another factor or another possible hypothesis may intervene: the fear of power decline, the rise of new threats, the rivalry, the desire to enjoy an opportunity for a momentum after the fall of the Soviet empire leaving a "strategic vacuum," especially the desire to stay as long as possible the only world superpower.

Nonetheless, whatever the answers we give to the questions related to these assumptions (there are others as well,) it seems clear that with regard to the Middle East, oil and funds connected to it are present in both cases: in the first, they are a goal to reach. In the second, they are a driving force, without which the objectives would be difficult if not impossible to achieve.

In the post 11 September 2001 (9/11,) President George W. Bush surprised many people with speeches that seemed - to put it simply - to divide the world into "good and evil," suggesting in the aftermath a subsequent doctrine dampened in a moral and moralistic ideology dubbed neoconservative, to distinguish it within the landscape of the American right. However, based on the findings of this research covering the eight years of the Bush era (2000-2008,) we can assert that every time solid material interests entered in conflict with the moral ideology of the Bush team, material interests prevailed. Better. It is these same interests that constitute the cause and effect of the Bush administration's public policy, which remains one of the most connected to the world of big business

and money throughout American history, since 1945. Therefore, it is a utilitarian view of the material interests that motivates and guides policy, not any missionary and moral vision. That is what we will show along the pages of this monograph.

## Methodology

In our view, the whole thing is about analyzing action itself, theoretically and practically. Theoretically, we adopt the paradigm of action in an interactionist-functional perspective, while applying it to the field of international relations.<sup>2</sup> As our subject-matter turns around three core elements, which are: politicians, entrepreneurs and the military, - we also rely on the theories of elite sociology. We are much indebted to the French sociological school (including Touraine, Bourdieu, Merle, Aron) the Anglo-Saxon sociology (Parsons, Goffman,) as well as the German (Weber, Beck,) to mention only the names of the most renowned. Yet, many other contemporary authors and researchers, living or dead, have been of a great help to this study.

Of course, far from staying locked into a paradigm, a method, or a unique vision of society, to the exclusion of others, we opt for an interdisciplinary approach, out of conviction.

This monograph is divided into two complementary parts. Part One deals with the elites and their concepts. Broadly speaking, it is about the ideas and the doctrines that governed American tackling of the Middle Eastern issues and that may continue to influence the behavior of decision makers with both parties: Republican and Democratic. However, as we focus on the Bush years (2000-2008) we analyze more in detail the Bush doctrine and its connections to the conservative right. As the conservative camp is obviously very influent in American politics conveying a particular vision of the Middle East and how the US should conduct policy out there, we dedicate a chapter to study these questions. The neoconservative rise inside that landscape and the influence it exerted on foreign policy required also to study the people who made this trend or movement, and their ideas, in the light of the events that occurred since 2001 in America and the Middle East. It was also necessary to try a comparative study of different influences exerted on the foreign policy during the Bush years, while

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<sup>2</sup> We do not claim to represent a school or a specific thought. We are as much indebted to the French sociological school (including Touraine, Bourdieu, Merle, Aron, etc..) than to the Anglo-Saxon sociology (Parsons, Goffman) or the German (Weber, Beck), to mention only the most renowned. Yet, we owe a lot to many other contemporary scholars and authors, living or dead, whose contribution is also much valuable.

answering the question: how the elites of the Middle East themselves perceived the events of this period and how did they react?

Part Two deals with the networks. We will confront the political discourse to the facts on the field. Based mainly on quantitative data and the empirical study of the US political system, we will show how the great issues of the Middle East are determined and oriented by the electoral campaigns, the money of the contributions, and the interests of big corporations. We will show how confronted to quite basic facts (how much you give and how much you get) all the beautiful discourses and their rhetoric are reduced to a small amount. However, our findings do not concern only the US policy makers; they are also quite determining for the Middle Eastern players. Many ideological discourses in the Arab and Muslim world would reveal to be just what they are: myths! The quantitative data and the nature of exchanges between US and Middle East elite networks (politicians, entrepreneurs, and the military) will show clearly how the whole system is set up to act and interact since and for years, past and present.

We will present at the beginning of each chapter, a proposition containing a key idea. Thereupon, we will suggest an approach to address the issues that seem most likely to advance our work, following which we will process the analysis. At the end of each chapter, we will make a small summary with the most important findings.

Following the academic traditions, we will begin this chapter with a brief review of the literature concerned with the Action paradigm and the closely related issues, without pretending exhaustiveness or uniqueness. The aim is to simply shed more light on these issues while anchoring our research into the field that served us as a conceptual framework.

Since we are concerned in this chapter with the consequences of the meeting between interests and ethical values of different societies, let us start from this point.

## Interests and Morals: identification and recognition as an Axiological issue

Political action can take numerous forms, but will always reflect whether directly or indirectly, either one of two things: *the interests* (of a specific group, an individual, a given society or a state) or *the ideology*. Of course, interests may express the ideology (for example, getting a good salary, enjoying a wide network of social relations, holding top-ranking positions in *Fortune* magazine lists and so forth, thus framing the

“American dream” of wealth and happiness). Alternatively, the ideology may also express interests (e.g. “What’s good for General Motors, is good for America!”).

To raise the issue of political action in connection to interests, is to raise the moral question. However, as soon as we try to define political action in connection to morals, two problems arise: that of *identification* and that of *recognition*.

Alain Touraine for example raises the issue of identification with an *actor*. *He says* : “Identification with the actor is tempting, as it gives instant meanings for the phenomena being observed.”<sup>(3)</sup> Yet, it does not go without risks. That is why he warned against the sociologist and the ethnographer’s claim that the purpose of their analysis is “the subjects’ self-knowledge.” The reason behind such a warning is understandable: “who would rely on notable or militant informants to know the opinions or the creeds of a social category?”<sup>(4)</sup> *The fact is the vision the actors hold about their own action is not neutral.* “The social signification of an action is not to be confounded with the meaning attributed to it by the actor.”<sup>(5)</sup>

This dilemma is present on diverse levels of the action: for instance, there is almost a full identification, between the official and the state he represents. Such identification exists both within and without the borders of the state. Thus, a policeman identifies himself with the state; and the same is true of the diplomat representing that state at the United Nations or elsewhere. Likewise, a political activist identifies with the leader of his political party, who completely identifies in turn, with the political ideology or the group.

It is evident that on this level it is impossible for political actors to provide any kind of objective understanding of their own action. Instead, they only provide their version of the event. For George W. Bush, for instance, there is no doubt that “the axis of good” is well the United States. But for Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran, the “Great Evil” (or the great Satan) is the United States. Also, for an Islamic extremist, to kill oneself with a bomb in the market, on board a flight or in any public place is not only a courageous act, but also an act of supreme sacrifice, for which the reward shall be eternal life in heaven. Differences such as these compel us to consider US-Middle East relations within a framework, which accounts for the particularities of both cultures and societies with

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<sup>3</sup> Alain Touraine, *Sociologie de l’action*, ed. Seuil, Paris 1965, 26.

<sup>4</sup> A. Touraine, op. Cit. 25.

<sup>5</sup> A. Touraine, op. Cit. 26.

respect to “conceptual” patterns (or frames of reference). As shall be demonstrated in this study, ideas in the realms of ethics, philosophy or politics can lead to greater disagreement, just as the rapprochement reflects the convergence of interests.

A further point for us to consider is the one which relates to recognition, a concept that is present at the very core of the *identity* issue. It is closely associated to a central tenet of contemporary sociology, which posits that: *values are created through action*.

The importance of this tenet cannot be minimized. For if action produces particular values, let us figure out for instance how the action of a suicide bombing would impact on Muslim youth. As we know, suicide bombings receive wide media coverage, (the most obvious example is still the September 11, 2001 attacks). Usually, in the aftermath of such suicidal missions, the attacker’s final will and testament, in which the bomber expresses pride in his actions, is broadcasted to a wider audience. Even years later, his parents may appear on TV to express their pride in their child’s action. Young people would praise him while his poster is often displayed on walls together with those of previous martyrs. Many other aspects of interest and celebration thus follow his action. There is therefore an entire *subculture* which elevates the act of suicide bombing to the highest levels of personal sacrifice and faith. Its imitation is not only socially acceptable, but maybe even required regardless of the *ambiguity* surrounding it. We may thus say that there is recognition of the value of that act on the part of the group or the social stratum concerned.

“Sociology devised two consecutive notions of values. Firstly, the values granted to humans, by God or the Spirit, or the Progress. Since they are stemming from the 'supersensible', they are not the products of action. Secondly, the values produced by action. It is in this second context that recognition becomes a central concept, and that identity is a stake value produced by humans.”<sup>(6)</sup> Olgierd Kutny thus notes how placing action at the center of reasoning would mean “facing directly the idea of a divided world, wherein supersensible values can no longer bring unity.”<sup>(7)</sup> To stay with our

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<sup>6</sup> Olgierd Kutny, *La négociation des valeurs. Introduction à la sociologie*. De Boeck & Larcier s.a., 1998, Département de Boeck université, Paris-Bruxelles, 255.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Kutny also indicated that the theme of a divided world first appeared in European social thought in 1789, when people rebelled against the aristocrats. It is also the moment the theme of recognition came out for the first time: the societal values were no longer common. Detecting in the French revolution the signs of a master-slave dialectic, Hegel will be the first to develop a Theory of Recognition. Thus, from the beginning, recognition and conflict, identity and struggle have been associated concepts. Today, the division of the world is expressed in new terms, which explains the revival, since 1975, of the concept of recognition that was firstly posited by Hegel. (Kutny, op. Cit. 256).

example about the suicidal bombing, it is obvious how this action divides not only the Muslim community directly concerned with regards to its position toward it, but it also divides the wider society with its diverse ethnic and religious components. For such an action presents a radical, reactionary, fanatic understanding of Islam, which stands in stark contrast to another perception, one which is more open, moderate, and modern. Hence, the suicide attack considered by some as an act of *martyrdom* worthy of praise, is for others an act of blind, bloody terror.

Kuty also points out that talking about a *role* or, even a system of roles, is equivalent to automatically resolving the question of recognition, implying at the end that “identity is no longer a granted fact, but rather an action, a work.”<sup>(8)</sup>

It is at this point that Kuty’s analysis joins that of Goffman. Indeed, if identification and recognition lie at the heart of the axiological issue of action, then information and the inherent *misinformation* which follows, represent two dimensions both expressing action.

## Deceiving and Pretending

The starting point in Goffman’s approach is “when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc.”<sup>(9)</sup> Such information would help them figure out what he expects of them and what, in turn, they should expect of him.

In order to link this approach to the international stage, we may take as example certain *subversive activities* of the United States intelligence agencies. These activities never subsided under the administration of George W. Bush, despite the promise made by neoconservatives to *moralize* political life. In fact, the exact opposite happened after September 11, although the activities of the various *special services* have been brought under the umbrella of one Department.

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<sup>8</sup> Kuty, op. Cit. 256-257.

<sup>9</sup> Erving Goffman, *the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Anchor Books- Doubleday, 1959, 1.

The academic books focused on the study of international relations are seldom interested, if at all, in the intelligence activities. In France, for example, Guillaume Devin points out that these activities have been completely ignored in academic writing, although one must recognize “the important role played by intelligence agencies in preparing international negotiations and/or conflicts, insofar as they collect the crucial data necessary for action and decision making”.<sup>(10)</sup> He further describes the following four roles of intelligence agencies that are “as old as the very first outset of *honorable* diplomatic activities”:<sup>(11)</sup>

- 1) Collecting accurate information;
- 2) Protecting the state secrets from adverse infiltration;
- 3) Misleading the enemy;
- 4) Carrying out subversive activities against enemy states.

Nonetheless, in this context, one should be wary of adopting too readily fables of the amazing efficacy and extraordinary brilliance of intelligence organizations. Their many setbacks and dysfunctions have utterly relativized their presumed omnipotence. The most speaking example of such failure was the colossal inability of US intelligence agencies to prevent September 11 attacks, despite the fact that they had received many information warning about the possibility of such an attack. If such was the case with the most advanced Western democracy, then, unlike common thinking, the situation cannot be much better in the police states of the Middle East. The fact is that the entire radical Islamist wave has almost completely escaped the control of these security apparatuses. Added to this is the fact that police states are less stable, and more fragile than other states, since they are always liable to the threat of military coups, terrorist attacks, and other disturbances. Moreover, they are constantly exposed to threats of a possible foreign attack, as the case of Saddam’s Iraq has shown.

Goffman also notes that the *expressiveness* of an individual, and, therefore, his capacity to give impressions of himself “appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*. The first case includes the symbols used in verbal speech and other types of communication which have traditionally been attached to words. As to the second type of sign activity, it encompasses a broad range of actions which others may be interpreted as a

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<sup>10</sup> Guillaume Devin, *Sociologie des relations internationales*, Paris, La Découverte, 2002, 62.

<sup>11</sup> G. Devin, op. Cit. 63-70.

denotation of the actor.”<sup>(12)</sup> Consequently to such a distinction, we better understand how an individual actor may intentionally misinform others. In the first case, he will deceive them ; in the second, he will pretend.

An important point to take from this approach is that *the actions carried out by any actor before of others, influence the others’ definition of the situation*. Within the September 11 context, the most notable example of this is how a handful of former Iraqi dissidents—most famously Ahmad Chalabi—managed to persuade the Americans of the great profits they would gain from attacking Iraq, and the wide margin of freedom they would have to mold Iraq in their own liking once the Baath regime is toppled. When Chalabi and his fellow Iraqi opposition members stood before the committees of the US Congress, they repeated statements that they had been writing and publishing for years, whereas the US administration remained deaf at the time. However, during the Bush presidency, they finally had powerful people listening to them, giving them the leverage needed to tip the scales in favor of a declaration of a war.<sup>(13)</sup>

In a similar vein, Goffman offers another idea: we can very well use whatever escapes the control of the individual during his communication - in other words, whatever he emits - to check the validity of what he controls – i.e. what he gives. Behind such an assertion, there is the assumption that individuals will always seek to present themselves to others in a light favorable to them.

Let us link again the individual to a general situation. We may evoke propaganda in this context, on which Devin writes: “propaganda is part of the tasks assumed by intelligence agencies, when the aim of disseminating information is to change public opinion in a given desired political direction.”<sup>(14)</sup> More broadly, in this sense, propaganda should be regarded as “a course of action used on the international scene, which has gained tremendous importance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, a number of factors have contributed to this, such as: first, the lack of homogeneity within the international system, causing the entanglement of international and internal conflicts and encouraging protests across enemy states - in what would even lead to their destabilization on the international level. Second, the identification of a major goal through the growing importance of public opinion as an influencing factor. Finally, the

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<sup>12</sup> Goffman, op. Cit. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Hichem Karoui, *L’après-Saddam en Irak*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> G. Devin, op.cit.70.

development of broadcast technologies, which since the 1920s has made it possible to cross the boundaries of other states with relatively low cost, which means that *ideological interference* became politically significant and technically possible. Since the Second World War, then, declared and undeclared wars have developed and have also been wars of images and airwaves."<sup>(15)</sup>

To mention another example here, how not to recall Colin Powell presenting the case of Iraq at the United Nations Security Council and brandishing images purported to *prove* that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD)? Shortly before the invasion, Powell presented the images as "evidence" on the guilt of Iraq. His own report stood in contradiction to the reports of the UN weapons inspectors even though he alleged to have relied on *unimpeachable* sources. When the world discovered a few days - even months after the invasion, that Iraq had not the least WMD, the Bush administration seemed seriously *embarrassed*. Charges of duplicity, deception and dishonesty fused from everywhere. Did George Bush lie to the United Nations, and the American people, in order to invade Iraq? The administration replied: "we have been *misled* by a secret British supplied intelligence report, and by Iraqi opposition members!"<sup>(16)</sup> Whatever the reality of the situation, the end result was that public opinion was *misinformed* and *manipulated*. Since then, some would not hesitate to suggest that the entire invasion was pre-planned to serve the interests of the military-industrial complex, Israel, or some other mysterious conspirators. This brings us to the moral dilemma of the actors' actions, as understood by Goffman.

Any definition of the situation includes specifically a "moral aspect," according to Goffman, for whom "society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way. Connected with this principle is a second, namely that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims he is. In consequence, when an individual projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind, he automatically exerts a moral demand upon

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Powell said: « At the time that I made the presentation, it reflected the collective judgment, the sound judgment of the intelligence community. But it turned out that the sourcing was inaccurate and wrong and, in some cases, deliberately misleading. » Powell: Prewarintel on Iraq labs was 'inaccurate', *msnbc.com*. [online] 17 May, 2004. Available from: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4997766/#.T5eybatUyuI> [Accessed July 2, 2012]

the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect."<sup>(17)</sup>

Expanding this definition outwards to allow it to cover groups of people and not just individuals, one can see how, for example, neoconservatives present themselves as *redeemers* of the American political scene; a milieu which they would like to moralize. A broad spectrum of people have identified themselves with such claims, despite that they are stated by an elitist group of politicians. We will see how George Bush, who was raised on these consensual values, has presented himself as the spokesperson of *compassionate conservatism* - a trend that has attracted supporters from across all sections of a society that appeared to be very sensitive to these values.

## Weber: Politics and Ethics

The axiological problem of human action appears in Max Weber's writings through two completely distinct and contradictory principles: the ethics of conviction versus the ethics of responsibility.<sup>(18)</sup>

According to Weber, the decisive factor in politics is *power*,<sup>(19)</sup> this in itself presents the biggest complication for any intellectual wishing to enter into the foray of politics armed with the *ethic of conviction*. Such moral principle will immediately come into collision with the principle of the end justifying the means. As Weber confirms: "no system of ethics in the world can ignore that in order to reach intended *positive* ends, we may seldom find ourselves obliged to accept dubious means, or at least ones which include ethical compromise. This is in addition to the possibility or perhaps even probability that this may very well result in *negative* implications. In this context, no ethical apparatus in the world can inform us when and to which extent can a good end, in terms of ethics, justify the means and outcomes that behold ethical ventures."<sup>(20)</sup> Weber was eventually able to solve this, stating that: "whoever seeks the salvation of his own soul

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<sup>17</sup> E. Goffman, op. Cit. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations, Edited and with an Introduction by John Dreijmanis, Algora Publishing, New York 2008, 198.

<sup>19</sup> Weber, op. Cit. 199.

<sup>20</sup> Op.Cit.199.

and the rescue of other souls does not do so by means of politics, which has quite different tasks: those that can only be solved by force."<sup>(21)</sup>

It is obvious that neither the neoconservatives, nor the Islamists, took Weber's advice to heart. This despite the fact that both parties pretend that political acts should be highly *moral*, or, at the very least, that the purpose of any political agenda should be moral. In fact, neither a neoconservative nor an Islamist intellectual can be regarded as *Weberian*, as both do not exclude the use of violence as a tool for political ends. However, as we know, not only an important part of the varied relations between Bush's America and the Middle East will be performed, on behalf of "morals" (political or religious), but it should be noted also that which opposes these two protagonists (Islamists and neoconservatives) is again morals or rather the vision each has of it.

For this reason, we should not omit to observe that the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility on the part of either of these two sides are no longer in conflict. We will show to which extent the confusion between these two types of ethics may go .

## The reality of the Game: Cynicism and Sincerity

Goffman points out that when an individual carries out his or her role, that person looks to be taken seriously by the audience. The actor demands that others around him believe – just like him - that his action will have the desired effect and that things are really as they appear.

However, we should expect, on the one hand, that the actor gets caught up into his own game, which means that he sincerely believes in the reality of whatever he figures out to be real. Such people are referred to by Goffman as *sincere* actors. In fact, only a sociologist or an individual who has been socially disenchanting could doubt the authenticity of what is presented as the reality. (It is the opposite case Touraine describes as *identification with the actor*.)

On the other hand, it is also possible that an actor does not become prisoner of his own game. Now, when the individual does not believe in his/her own actions or is indifferent to the beliefs of his (her) audience, we then speak of *cynicism* as opposed to *sincerity*. However, this does not hamper the cynical actor from enjoying his own aggressiveness when playing with something which others take at face value.<sup>(22)</sup> We may still ponder

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<sup>21</sup> Weber, op. Cit. 204.

<sup>22</sup> E. Goffman, op. Cit.18.

whether George Bush was sincere or cynical when speaking about the “Axis of Evil”, just like Ronald Reagan talking of the “Evil Empire”. Yet, there is much more. Consider the hijackers who flew planes into the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001: can one describe them as being *cynical* actors or *sincere* ones? We obviously reach here the heart of the dilemma.

Who is really the *sincere* actor? Is it Ben Laden, enjoying the attack he had launched on September 11 against what he used to call the apostates, and considering his act as a form of *jihad* in the name of God? Is it Saddam Hussein, firing Scud missiles on Tel Aviv as soon as he felt the pressure exerted by the international coalition led by the former President Bush (George Herbert Walker Bush), never daring to try that before? It seems obvious, here at least, that of the two men, Saddam Hussein was the more cynical, in his attempts to exploit Arab anger against Israel.

The sincere actor follows a natural inclination, thus described by Robert Park: “it is probably no mere historical accident that the word person [Persona], in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role... it is in these roles that we know each other; and it is in these roles that we know ourselves.”<sup>(23)</sup> Park goes on saying: “in a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves - the role we are striving to live up to - this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons.”<sup>(24)</sup>

In conclusion, regardless of his sincerity or cynicism, the political actor always ends up identifying with the image that he/she would like to project of himself/herself.

## Idealization. The World is a wedding

According to Goffman, social actors strive, continuously, to carry out a performance that presents an idealized view to their observers by all possible means. This is normal, since there is a normal tendency amongst humans to always put forward what they deem to best represent them. Moreover, this is particularly true when the action or *performance* in question highlights the common official values of the society in which it occurs. Then,

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Ezra Park, *Race and Culture*, Glencoe, III: The Free Press, 1950. 249; E. Goffman, op. Cit.19.

<sup>24</sup> Robert E. Park, op. Cit. 250.

we tend to see in these values a kind of *celebration*: "in so far as the expressive bias of performances comes to be accepted as reality, then that which is accepted at the moment as reality will have some of the characteristics of a celebration."<sup>(25)</sup> Hence, "to stay out in one's room away from the party," or away from the interaction place, is akin, says Goffman, to staying in a room separate from "the place where the reality is being performed. The world, in truth, is a wedding."<sup>(26)</sup>

How is it possible to resist transposing this *idealization* or this *wedding* into the political sphere, where all important events become rallying points that everyone should attend, as they do not want to miss the *party*?

Nevertheless, caution should be used since there is not only *positive idealization* where the actor's actions are presented as a kind of guarantee that the party is going on ; but there is also *negative idealization* of social situations that overuse some negative aspects in order to seek sympathy, compassion, help or any other form of involvement and commitment to a particular *cause*. Here as well, affiliation with a group appears as a goal in itself.

Similarly, there is the *idealization* that conceals the positive aspects of a given situation to better prove the invalidity of its antithesis.

Thus, while performing the presentation of himself, the actor would attempt to "diminish or cloak, those events and those actions which do not fit within the actor's own idealized narrative of himself."<sup>(27)</sup> Additionally, the actor usually tends "to make his audience believe that he is *close* to them, in a much more idealized way than actual reality."<sup>(28)</sup>

To make these ideas clearer, a look back at September 11 again and the Muslim suicide-bomber (called Shaheed) would be very instructive. After all , there is still the hypothesis never verified assuming that George Bush's policies in the Middle East might have been different were it not for the events of September 11. Hence the importance of understanding the suicide bombing act.

We know that the status of *Shaheed Hay* (alive martyr) is not given to everyone. The candidate must undergo a very long and complex ritualized initiation, one which is highly ceremonial. The presumptive martyr goes through a process of mental and

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<sup>25</sup> E. Goffman, op. Cit. 35.

<sup>26</sup> Goffman, op. Cit. 36.

<sup>27</sup> Goffman, op. Cit. 48.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

physical training; such a secret process builds on varied cultural ingredients, borrowed from history, Sufi traditions, philosophy, and Islamic jurisprudence. In short, anything that not only would let him accept the idea of martyrdom, (he had already accepted it since the day he was designed, if he did not design himself, for the operation); but would also let him see it as the mission for which *God* has chosen him and the fate for which he was born.

It is worth mentioning here that this entire preparatory process is surrounded by a shroud of mystery, while the living martyr is also showered with love, respect and much admiration, all in return for the bravery he shows. In this way, the living martyr is celebrated just as a bridegroom in the run-up to a wedding. Added to this is the filmed final will and testament of the living martyr, where he can be seen holding on to a copy of the Koran and carrying a rifle, all serves to underscore the righteousness of his cause, and to highlight his determination and strength of belief in it. Furthermore, it is also the occasion to hold a celebration for this living martyr before his final act, a celebration during which he can reveal his true identity, and the group can recognize him. In this way, the ritual idealization of a suicide mission is completed.

However idealization is not confined to this case only. The political realm is precisely where often material interests are concealed under ethical rhetoric and idealized discourse. We will farther discuss to what extent this idea is verifiable, but we can hardly understand this point without mentioning Marx's conclusive contribution.<sup>(29)</sup>

## Interests: the hidden part of the iceberg

Marx summed up his sociological conception in the introduction to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, published in Berlin (1859), in which he states that "The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarized as follows. In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of

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<sup>29</sup> Raymond Aron expressed well this idea when he said: "Marx offered a view of capitalism and history based on a combination of the following concepts that can be used in any sociological analysis. These are the concepts of : forces and relations of production, class struggle, class consciousness, infrastructure and superstructure. Personally, if I have to analyze the Soviet or American society, I would start my analysis promptly through the lenses of economics and the condition of productive forces, before assessing the relations of production and the social relations. Thus, the critical and systematic use of those concepts in understanding and analyzing modern society, as well as any historic society, remains valid to date." See: *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*, Gallimard, 1967, 184.

their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."<sup>(30)</sup>

Raymond Aron, who is actually the complete antithesis of the Marxist sociologist, described this text as "the most important work written by Marx" and one which "fully encapsulates his sociological view."<sup>(31)</sup> Aron goes further to suggest that Marx "not only distinguished between infrastructure and superstructure, but also opposed social reality to consciousness," adding "he then revealed his general conception according to which, the way people think must be explained by the social relations in which they are involved."<sup>(32)</sup> The propositions contained in the *Contribution to the Critique*, says Aron, "may serve as a basis for what we call today the sociology of knowledge."<sup>(33)</sup>

Therefore, regardless of whether one ideologizes whatever one idealizes, or idealizes what one ideologizes, the materialistic interests still remain the bedrock of social interactions, as they are between different societies. To paraphrase Aron, we cannot analyze or understand any society, whether capitalist or otherwise, without the use of these key-concepts. Through an analysis of the connections between societal networks and power, we will show in the next chapters how all social relations evolve around materialistic interests. American politics cannot be understood outside this framework. Let us put it again in simple words. Many people are still unable to understand the US policy in the Middle East, which seems to them arbitrary and unjustified, whereas it is so simple to recall some laws of sociology Karl Marx has explained more than a century ago to grasp what sounds obscure. This does not mean we would thus justify Bush's policies, or make his decisions appear less *arbitrary* than they actually were. It is not our role. We merely intend to analyze the political action through the lenses of social

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<sup>30</sup> For further information, see the classic work of Karl Marx on social studies: *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859, Moscow: Progress Publishers. 184. Available from: [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Contribution\\_to\\_the\\_Critique\\_of\\_Political\\_Economy.pdf](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Contribution_to_the_Critique_of_Political_Economy.pdf) [Accessed July, 11, 2012]

<sup>31</sup> Raymond Aron, op. cit.152.

<sup>32</sup> Aron, op. Cit.155.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

sciences, so that we could rationally answer the questions raised particularly in the Arab world since half a century. Such questions as: why is the US still so biased in favor of Israel over America's Arab allies? Why has no single US administration been able to leverage its political clout to find a solution to the Palestinian problem, and that of the occupied Arab territories, and that of the blind violence born of this conflict? Why did we see George W. Bush, after working during his first presidential campaign to secure the support of the Arab and Muslim Americans, turning his back on them? Etc.

We compare the US Middle East policy here to an iceberg of which only a very small part is visible.

We assume that despite the great diplomatic efforts and the extensive intellectual and public relations' endeavoring from think tanks and media outlets to explain US policy and even to make it appear "acceptable" to different and opposite parties, the largest part of this policy remains a mystery to those who are not initiated to the American political system, hence the deadlock in all that concerns diplomatic approaches and conflict resolution.

We still assume that if violence continues to prevail on the US - Middle East relations – as September 11, along with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, clearly showed - this is at least partially due to the mutual lack of understanding on both sides.

The last assumption in this context is that the far hidden part of the iceberg should be looked for in the realm of interests and the networks they constitute.

If we understand little, or not at all, how "it works" in the US or how "it works" in the Middle East, it is quite unnecessary to go further. Our task is therefore to discover the underwater part of the iceberg during the Bush administration. Clearly put: the networks of interests. It is to this end that we devote the second part of this monograph.

However, one may ask: what are actually the interests?

Adam Smith writes in his *Wealth of Nations* that "an augmentation of fortune is the means by which the greater part of men propose and wish to better their condition. It is the means the most vulgar and the most obvious; and the most likely way of augmenting their fortune is to save and accumulate some part of what they acquire, either regularly and annually, or upon some extraordinary occasions. Though the principle of expense, therefore, prevails in almost all men upon some occasions, and in some men upon almost all occasions, yet in the greater part of men, taking the whole

course of their life at an average, the principle of frugality seems not only to predominate, but to predominate very greatly."<sup>(34)</sup>

Hence, according to Smith, elucidating where **INTERESTS** lie is not only the key to understanding liberal economies, but it is also particularly beneficial as a general premise applicable to both individuals and groups. In other words, this method applies to social strata and classes, international groupings of countries, even nation-states, as well as other kinds of groups. Explaining these notions is not only paramount in the analysis of social relations and networks of connections within US and Middle Eastern societies, but it is also primordial for the good understanding of interactions between both societies. Concerning the latter case, problems related to the development and evolution of world capitalism, globalization, and free trade, as well as many other related issues all come into play. We will see how this development defines the geopolitical and geostrategic map. For in the course of its transformation, the world capitalist system, will also transform the instruments of control as well as those of exchange.

Indeed, there is no way of avoiding the problem of material interests and incentives in connection with any given policy in the Middle East, let alone the Bush policy, especially regarding its interventionist and military aspects. For some observers, it is this very aspect that prevails on the relationships between the US and the small states of the Middle East, whence the violence. In this context, one may observe that even though the acquisition and control of wealth on the cross-national scale is often the cause of tensions, this process is in fact subject to variables that should be identified to help understanding:

The first variable is related to *time*. The power of empires and states is indeed in constant change.

The second variable is related to the diversity of wealth criteria: a small country with a higher GDP per capita than that of the United States for example, is not necessarily the richest. Similarly, the Arab oil states, with all the income they accumulate, are not necessarily richer than old industrial countries, such as France or England.

The flows of international trade are often dependent on internal phenomena, such as class struggles, interests conflicts, political rivalries, unions' action, etc... Thus, it is clear that if we seek to understand the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, then we should also adopt the same approach, meaning that we should try to understand

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<sup>34</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into The Nature And The Causes of The Wealth of Nations*. (Methuen & Co. LTD, London, fourth edition, 1925,) Book II, chap. III, p. 203.

how the *system* operates in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, in order to identify the determinants of foreign policy and the mechanisms of decision-making.

If we evoke the tensions due to long-settled imbalances, which become determining *characteristics* of the relations between the nations and the status quo – as it is the case in the Middle East - we cannot omit the lack of reciprocity in these relationships, whereas small states claim to be enjoying sovereignty, according to a definition based on the “moral aspect” of the situation.<sup>(35)</sup> Hence, the need to analyze (even briefly) the current situation of the state and the condition of actors performing roles and exerting influence on the international stage, which we will do a little further.

## Reciprocity and power relationships

Reciprocity is a distinct characteristic of the relations between politics and economy. The view defended by Robert Gilpin emphasizes that, on the one hand, policies largely determine the scope of economic activity and connect it to guidelines aiming to serve the interests of dominant groups.<sup>(36)</sup> On the other hand, “the economic process itself tends to redistribute power and wealth; it transforms the power relationships among groups,<sup>(37)</sup> which in turn leads to the transformation of the political system and the restructuring of economic relations. Indeed, this reciprocal *interaction* between economy and politics is the key to understanding the dynamics of international relations.

However, there is another reason to adopt the approach based on the networks’ analysis: the truth is, unlike wealth, power cannot be quantified. Hence, the perception of power relationships is certainly of utmost importance. That is why Gilpin draws our attention to the fact that politicians always try to manipulate the perceptions of other politicians, when it comes to the distribution of power. Since, according to him, in international relations, “there is no hierarchy of power,” adding: “Power may take many

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<sup>35</sup> Similar to individuals, states provide a self-narrative and expect to be treated the way they present themselves. However, a number of facts should be faced: the international arena does not provide equality nor is it egalitarian; Sovereignty is sometimes delusional ; and power balance determines the relations between states more than the law does.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Gilpin, *US Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Direct Foreign Investment*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975). Gilpin also says on page 21: “The exercise of power in all its forms is a major determinant of the nature of an economic system.”

<sup>37</sup> Robert Gilpin, *op.Cit.*22.

forms - military, economic, or psychological – though, in the final analysis, force is the ultimate form of power.”<sup>(38)</sup>

Thus, we will show after examining the American society, how social relationships as well as the various claims, demands and representations... are frequently expressed, channeled and institutionalized by interest groups that have acquired a political significance far beyond the scope of domestic issues, as they are exercising a decisive influence on foreign policy.

Then, the question arises: specifically, how all this works?

## Interest groups and public interest

During the Eighty-first session of the Congress, the House of Representatives created “the Select Committee on Lobbying Activities” - known as the Buchanan Committee - in order to investigate the nature and extent of the pressures exerted on the US government representative branch by organized groups. Zeigler and Peak cite the testimony of the political scientist, George Galloway, before the Buchanan committee, saying: “the primary responsibility of Congress is to promote the general welfare (...) No public policy could ever be the mere sum of the demands of organized special interests, (..) for there are vital common interests that cannot be organized by pressure groups.”<sup>(39)</sup>

The authors then add: “the difficulty of assuming the existence of a public interest is very easily recognized,” but the question remains: what are those *vital interests*? To answer this question, Peak and Zeigler observe that the Buchanan Committee “never undertook the task of specifying such overarching goals, nor has there ever been a clear formulation of the components of a hypothetical general interest.”<sup>(40)</sup>

Thus, we realize the important margin of freedom of action left to interest groups, lobbies and other pressure groups in the United States.

Yet, Zeigler and Peak remarked a paradox, though: “interest groups thrive in a nation that is suspicious about them.” Explaining this point, they say: “a curious aspect of our

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<sup>38</sup> R. Gilpin, 24.

<sup>39</sup> L. Harmon Zeigler and G. Wayne Peak, *Interest Groups in American Society* 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972): 21.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

society is the tendency of many of us to use the word *lobbyist* to refer to something evil while engaging in the very tactics which we condemn."<sup>(41)</sup>

Ultimately, the meaning of this paradox is simple: people approve the actions of groups that they identify themselves with, or with whom they share common beliefs, while condemning at once similar activities carried out by rival or adverse groups.

In fact, under a democratic system, pressure groups are not necessarily a symptom of alienation or illness. At the very heart of the pluralist theory in modern political science, there is the belief that individuals can indeed better communicate their needs and desires to the government if they do through concerted group action: "in a large complex society, one person stands little chance of being heard and a much lesser chance of being able to affect the governmental decision-making process."<sup>(42)</sup> That is why it is easier for a number of people with common interests to form a group, in order to act through the channels of lobbying, which would also mean undertaking a legitimate democratic interaction with the government. In this context, "pressure groups and political parties are both representative of the efforts of a substantial number of people to play a role in the formation of public policy."<sup>(43)</sup> The essential difference between the two would be that political parties seek to elect or appoint their members in governmental bodies, while pressure groups do not have that goal. Another difference is that political parties address people trying to persuade the majority of the voters of their point of view, while pressure groups address legislators, administrators and judges, in other words, people in positions of power.<sup>(44)</sup>

However, in their attempts to win favorable political decisions, interest groups have grown increasingly focused on the value of public opinion, which may have become subject to their courting, too. Consequently, different techniques are used to mobilize and sensitize public opinion, as regards the aimed objectives.

Lobbying indeed has become a profession having its own experts and methods. The literature produced by these organizations on their techniques, is generally intended for internal use. Experts in lobbying are also people who "know the vagaries of the legislative process and are adept at getting along with politicians. Many of these lobbyists are lawyers with a background in governmental service."<sup>(45)</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Zeigler and Peak, op. Cit. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Zeigler and Peak, op. Cit. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Zeigler and Peak, op. Cit. 53.

<sup>44</sup> Sometimes, this distinction may not be available, especially when members of pressure groups are also members of political parties at the same time; although, even in this case, their activities remain different.

<sup>45</sup> Zeigler and Peak, op. Cit. 149.

A description by Samuel Patterson of that kind of lobbyist, known as *the intermediary*, pictures him " as the congressional delegate who considers that his job consists in establishing crucial contacts with the legislators. He devotes his efforts and energy touring the hallways of Congress; visiting legislators, talking to them and getting closer to them, building relations with administrative assistants and officers working for legislators, enhancing the cordial bonds linking the lobbyist to both senior legislators and Congress staff, and to develop communication with members of important Congressional committees."<sup>(46)</sup>

Thus, it is not possible to minimize, or ignore the role of lobbies in the United States, especially when attempting to answer the question about winning the political battles.

## Who wins the political battles?

As numerous authors have noted the influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) - the powerful Jewish lobby - on US foreign policy, it is inevitable to raise two questions: who wins the political battles? And what is the Arab lobby doing about this?

1- To answer the first question, one may say, on the one hand, that theoretically, there is no organization or a durable coalition capable of achieving constant victory and gaining all decisions and issues of importance. It is important therefore to introduce here the notions of relative and/or gradual victory. On the second hand, the biggest contributors to political action committees (during election campaigns) may obtain greater access to power and achieve victories more easily in some cases. When lobbying does not seem to work or appear to be failing to achieve its intended goals, observers would attribute this failure to the weak lobbying effects on the Congress vote compared to other factors taken into account. In some political events, the impact of lobbying depends on the resources available to the opponents and the weight of their political arguments. Moreover, elected officials take into account the views of their constituents - even if disorganized - along with their own ideological inclinations.

2- As to the second question, the Arab American lobby is also quite active as well. However, September 11 was detrimental to its influence on public affairs, as it constituted an unmatched blow to the whole community, pushing it toward assuming a defensive position, where for exculpation it had to distance itself from radicals and

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<sup>46</sup> Samuel C. Patterson, *The Role of the Labor Lobbyist* » (paper presented to the 1962 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association), 11.

Islamists altogether. Consecutively, it sought self-protection against Islamophobic media campaigns, led by those who tend to put all the Arabs in the same basket. In other words, the Arab lobby in the United States, which was not very powerful anyway, has been compelled to seeking disculpation and deliverance from suspicion within a traumatized society that started looking at all the Arabs as potential terrorists. However, this is only one aspect of the problems that confront the Arab lobby. In point of fact, its deficiency is also due to structural factors that have nothing to do with September 11 and its repercussions. The same applies to the Muslim American lobby, at least with regard to the Middle East issues.

These two questions leading us to make such assumptions, also open up the widest field of investigation in order to identify the helping and the hindering factors in the politics of the Middle East. Thus, we have already a lead to explore: i.e. *lobbying*. Whence the question that should be answered about the lobbying methods of work, in terms of strategies, tactics and alliances.

## Lobbying strategies

Lobbying does not mean the practice of political corruption or covert transactions. Both methods are specific to Third World countries, according to the reports of Transparency International, where however, they are not exercised by lobbyists, but by individuals at different levels of the social pyramid,<sup>(47)</sup> in order to get some favors or privileges from officials or other individuals in positions of power. In the United States, success is granted to the lobbies according to their ability to show the *public interest* behind their cause. For instance, lobbyists give politicians substantial information, analyses, and logical arguments, which may not be available to rival groups, thus justifying the solutions they wish. An example of a *successful* lobbying strategy under the Bush administration was performed by the Iraqi opposition groups in exile, seeking the assistance of the US for toppling Saddam Hussein.

Successful political organizations work on mobilizing their resources to achieve three strategic purposes:

- *Gaining attention*: an *external game* that sheds lights, through publicity for example, on the agenda of the organization, by means of the mass media as well as through the regular forums of the legislative power.
- *Keeping in touch*: an *internal game* of chats and networking with local officials, brokers and other intermediaries.

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<sup>47</sup> Including the lowest level, as can be inferred from the existence of illegal trafficking (drugs, weapons, counterfeit money, etc.) which cannot continue without the collusion between the mafia gangs and some senior officials or political leaders.

- *Consolidation*: the lobbyists continue coming and going, to demonstrate that the issue they raised is still relevant, thus enhancing both their access to politicians and to the issues discussed.

## Lobbying Tactics

Political organizations use a set of tactics in order to influence the views of elected or appointed officials. Some of the tactics involve:

- Testifying before the Congress or before the councils of certain agencies;
- Communicating directly with legislators or other officials;
- Communicating informally with legislators and other officials;
- Presenting research findings;
- Building coalitions with other groups and planning strategies with governmental officials;
- Mass media: interviews with journalists and advertisements;
- Policy making: drafting legislations and regulations, shaping implemented policies, assisting in advisory committees, and preparing agendas;
- Influencing constituencies: organizing petition signing campaigns, getting cooperation from influential citizens, and warning legislators of certain effects concerning their districts;
- Litigations: taking legal action and other procedures required by courts, when necessary.
- Organizing demonstrations and protests;

Additionally, other tactics may include: attempting to influence appointments and policies as well as trying to get closer to officials, etc.

## Lobbying alliances

When any given organization, whether political or otherwise, believes that its interests are threatened by a certain legislation or regulation law, it may decide to act either alone or with a coalition, to exert pressures. We thus observe the following:

- Most political organizations work within coalitions where tasks are shared;
- Coalitions are short-term alliances seeking to achieve specific objectives, (such as imposing restrictions or lifting the ban on the importation of a certain product for example);
- Coalitions' partners may change according to the change of goals;
- Allied organizations forming a coalition together to exert pressure, have better chances of success than those who work solely;

- Important cleavages may arise within a single political arena (such as employers versus trade unions in work related cases.)

The previous analysis is an attempt to formulate a theoretical framework for political action, especially with respect to its connection to morals and interests. Nonetheless, one should not imagine that the strategies, tactics and alliances of interest groups are located only on the national political arena of the United States. In fact, they go far beyond it, because of the very nature of US global interests. Indeed, these are often interests of huge companies and multinational corporations, whose activities and influence go far beyond US borders reaching different countries and regions all over the world. This is the point where the paradigm of action joins the sociology of international relations: assuming it is true that Bush's policies were born on a territory with its own characteristics, they had also to be implemented abroad, as foreign policy. Better: conceding that interest groups' action is subject to internal determinisms, and given that foreign policy responds, to a certain extent, to the specific requirements related to those determinisms, it would be equally true to say that interaction with the outside world creates new pressures and determinisms, exerting their effects on the overall administration policies, not only on foreign policy.

For example, events that are clearly geographically distant from the United States (e.g. Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamic radicalism specifically in the Middle East, rise of the Euro, soaring prices of oil, etc...) may affect the way Americans manage their foreign policy, their system of external defense, their homeland security, their economy, as well as their future plans. They may even impact issues of US domestic policy, given that they cannot be ignored in Congressional deliberations or even in election campaigns. This brings us to another hypothesis: external unresolved problems, in which the US is strongly involved, may cause a chain of events that could go from bad to worse. In a first phase, they may harm the image of the United States, and discredit its entire policy. In a second phase, in the absence of any reconsideration with the aim of rectifying and restoring balance to US positions, these very problems may end up causing a worse evil, on the domestic side or abroad. Such evil may instigate a chain of reactions that may, in turn, cause an even worse evil, and so forth.

We think that September 11, and the events that took place before and after, would be unexplainable without the above mentioned hypothesis. In fact, the reaction of the Bush administration to 9/11 is the best example expressing the chain of "from bad to worse," and not the possible reconsideration of US positions seeking rectification and rebalance. In the chapter entitled: "From Truman to Bush" (Part One) of this monograph, a summary of US presidents' official positions (doctrines) related to the Middle East will be presented, showing to what extent - historically speaking - America has been involved in the internal problems of this region. But, not to be unfair, we will also show how the Bush administration had to pay the costs of past sins while facing

some of the consequences and repercussions of former political decisions. Indeed, September 11 was not expected, and nothing confirms, or refutes for that matter, that without this event, President Bush would have still attacked Afghanistan and Iraq.

## An approach to action in the sociology of international affairs.

### Religion and politics on the national and international levels

In Part One of this monograph, we treat the inevitable question of religion and politics. The issue concerns directly the elites and their concepts, although it has a huge impact on the masses. In the United States, the issue is neither republican nor democrat but a phenomenon involving the entire society, which is also the case in the Middle East. Mr Barack Obama acknowledged the importance of this matter, even before running for President, when he wrote in 2006: "it is a truism that we Americans are a religious people. According to the most recent surveys, 95 percent of Americans believe in God, more than two-thirds belong to a church, 37 percent call themselves committed Christians..."<sup>(48)</sup> He even noted that religion should not be excluded or abandoned from public debate, for the "discomfort of some progressives with any hint of religiosity has often inhibited us from addressing issues in moral terms,"<sup>(49)</sup> something that conservative republicans have always incorporated into their discourse.

Basically, our fundamental problem is expressed by the following paradox: we live in a world primarily dominated by a secular approach to politics. Yet, it is also a world where religion continues to exert most a powerful influence. Because of their connection with what Parsons calls the "general value integration," religious movements claim "a paramount jurisdiction over human value orientations, which must somehow be integrated with the values institutionalized in the state."<sup>(50)</sup> This is fundamentally the claim of Islamic movements, one might say, but in fact, they are certainly not alone in this endeavor. The dilemma also concerns secular societies such as the United States, where religious movements are particularly active. Their success is due to the failure of

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<sup>48</sup> Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, (Three Rivers Press, 2006), 198.

<sup>49</sup> B. Obama, op. Cit. 214-215. Another example shows the importance that he accords to the issue, saying: "Our fear of getting 'preachy' may also lead us to discount the role that values and culture play in addressing some of our most urgent social problems."

<sup>50</sup> Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967. 165.

*liberal elitism* to grasp the need of Americans for something more than material comfort. This is at least the point of view of the liberal Democrat, Obama, who explained the phenomenon saying: “the failure of the country’s dominant cultural institutions to acknowledge America’s religious impulse helped foster a degree of religious entrepreneurship unmatched elsewhere in the industrialized world.”<sup>(51)</sup> As President Obama noted: “introduced by Jimmy Carter, the religious discourse emerged gradually, but steadily, as an inevitable means to the world of politics.”<sup>(52)</sup> However, Democrats later abandoned it to their Republican rivals. Since then, the need to tackle clearly the issue concerning the relation between religion and politics in the US has grown more and more insistent.

For us, the problem is all the more complicated as it is widely ignored. Indeed, we will demonstrate how a conquering new right, nurtured by religious movements and by a certain Christian messianism, has become a powerful player in the American social and political system under the Bush administration. It is worth mentioning on the other hand, that the reactions to this movement in the Middle East sound as varied justifications for the emergence of similar movements specific to the region. In other words, US Christian messianism eventually plays into the hands of the entire Islamist nebula, regardless whether radical or moderate. The Middle East states would thus be simultaneously facing the dual pressures of the rising influence of their own *religious right* (i.e., the Islamists) along with the increasing influence of the American conservative messianism. With this respect, the risks are enormous. Indeed, several Arab and Muslim observers see connections between this new messianic right-wing, neo-conservatism, the radical Israeli right-wing and the plans of war and conquest. We will address this issue, while avoiding *conspiracy theories* because they are based on sheer speculations. Relying on facts, we will present verifiable data, available to the public, without neglecting to notice how some issues have been perceived. Hence, the issues of *power and force* are not regarded by the Arab and Muslim observers as being relegated to Caesar<sup>(53)</sup> in the Bush administration, which they accuse of being the instrument of a neo-Messianism.

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<sup>51</sup> Obama added: “Pushed out of sight but still throbbing with vitality throughout the heartland and the Bible Belt, a parallel universe emerged, a world not only of revivals and thriving ministries but also of Christian television, radio, universities, publishers, and entertainment...” Ibid. 200.

<sup>52</sup> B. Obama, Ibid. 201.

<sup>53</sup> Parsons put it this way: “so long as they are alienated from the central institutional structure, the problems of

power and force can be relegated to ‘Caesar’ in the sense of Early Christianity. But if the movement becomes institutionalized as the dominant religion of a going society, it must somehow come to terms with these problems.” T. Parsons, op.Cit.165.

Nevertheless, this is only one aspect of a more intricate problem. From another perspective, we see America strangely *reduced* - despite its power- at *playing the game* of Middle Eastern authoritarian states as it seems, by continuing to provide them assistance and support. Yet, secular America, which more than ever has been talking about *democratizing* the Middle East, knows very well that all those countries have institutionalized religion at the center of the power structure, instrumentalising it for political purposes. Even in a country that Bush's America has *helped* to get rid of its dictatorship, (i.e. Iraq) the constitution makes it clear that Islam is the dominant religion.

Apparently, the scope taken by major religious movements in the US and Middle East societies is not problematic, as long as it remains confined to domestic affairs. But the problem arises when internal conflicts tend to spread outside the borders, whereas the international law does not seem well prepared to convincingly resolve them. Indeed, when religious movements become amenable to being transplanted into the political structure of the society, so to acquire the capacity to strongly influence interaction at the international level, while there are no regulatory institutions able to address the problem at this level, then how to respond?

What seems to be quite significant in this context is the fact that the international system, as it is, cannot tackle the problems outside the legal-moral framework. It has no other means of proceeding in respect of an interaction that never reveals its true *birth certificate*, while its connections with religious symbols is always concealed by a discourse more or less focused on *mutual interests*, cooperation, support funds or what we also call *controversy funds*. We assume that such deficiency of the international system, (i.e. incapacity to effectively solve religiously connected problems), is due to the fact that international law is a positive law, while religious-political demands tend to exceed this framework and occult or challenge it. Assuming that 9/11 would not have happened without the support of the above mentioned religious networks that go beyond the international legal framework, the response of the Bush administration, has not really favored an approach respectful of international law either ( e.g. The UN failed to stop the war machine). Obviously, one of the key goals of the Bush doctrine was precisely to seek the *legal support* needed for the military intervention, through confusing between the concepts of *preemptive* and *preventive war*, hence the debate about the concept of *just war*.

The question is then: what has thus caused a hardening of positions when, based on the *Bush doctrine*, the administration sought support from its European and Arab allies, in addition to the UN, in order to attack Iraq?

To answer this question, we have to first admit, that Mr Bush Middle East policy, being part of the foreign policy domain *par excellence*, especially in its varied, diplomatic, economic, financial, military and security related aspects, public and secret as well; it is therefore natural to consider it within its objective framework, which is that of *international relations*. Furthermore, even if the US is presently an unrivalled world

superpower, it is still compelled to work through the same channels used by other actors on the international arena. The US is then theoretically bound in its action by the same rules of conduct to which other states comply. It is within these limits and because of them that emerge the problems related to action. For as soon as we bypass the national threshold and move toward the international stage, the rules change. Adapting or readjusting policy accordingly is then a matter of crucial importance, although not always respected.

Let us pursue with exploring these *rules of the game*.

## Defining international relations

What may best define the world in which we live, is probably the fact that we cannot, whatever the region - even hypothetically - abolish the states without simultaneously changing international relations. For we live in *a world of states*. Their existence – that very special juxtaposition – is not a mere land parceling. States isolate populations and make of them peoples living under different – sometimes opposed - political, legal, economic, social and cultural systems. There is therefore a tendency to define international relations in terms of transnational flows. Included within these flows are not only the relations between governments, but also those between individuals, and between public and private groups, as well.

However, given that this conception expands the concept of the *actor* – to encompass not only state and government, but also other relevant parties, both public and private (e.g. opposition movements, intellectuals, trade unions, and other civil society organizations,) we meet here the concept of *communication networks*, which are woven across the borders, overlapping with governmental *flows*, thus creating regions where forms of solidarity, mutual commitments and antagonisms emerge.

If the realistic approach of international affairs, which indisputably prevailed from the 1930's until the 1960's, emphasized the role of the state as a major player in the system, it is noteworthy that since the late sixties, this approach became disputable through three sets of factors:

The first set is closely related to the Vietnam war, which proved the possibility to deter the plans of a superpower, such as the United States, and that national and transnational pressure groups may weigh in, and demand the moralization of policy, thus inducing change. If anything the experience of Vietnam actually shows that, regardless of its power, the State is no longer the sole actor on the international political arena. National and international public opinion, as well as transnational

solidarity movements, have emerged with high visibility on the global scene, thus undermining the old Real-Politik approach.

The second set of factors is purely academic. Indeed, it is the development achieved in social sciences that caused the expansion of the *actor* concept, through empirical data collection, field research, quantitative analyses, laboratory simulations, etc. The influence exerted by empirical, behavioral and psycho-social methods, transferred research from the sphere of general theories unto that of "partial theories," (about decision making, conflicts, strategies, regional integration, international organizations, etc...) *It became therefore possible to apply micro-sociological approaches to the international scene*, and to explore empirically smaller fields and sub-systems. That will subsequently show that the State is no longer the prevailing unit on the global stage, as more actors are involved and interact within more open and complex networks.

The third set of factors concerns the development and proliferation of these new actors: multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, international governmental bodies, transnational movements of migration, trade, tourism, and terrorism ... All this puts at stake the territorial state as a basic political unit, and shows the erosion of its sovereignty.

Furthermore, NGOs' meddling with the internal affairs of some states has not always been *welcomed*, (e.g. Darfur crisis, Post-Taliban Afghanistan, assistance to the population in Iraq or Pakistan, etc.) This unwanted presence is manifested by the number of attacks and kidnapping operations which targeted NGOs officials, as it is expressed by the struggle between some governments and the UNO. As to the multinational corporations, their interference in some delicate situations is no longer a secret: "they are able to intrude directly in domestic affairs (whether it is the mother country or a host), in order to win the allegiance of the ruling elite (e.g. Elf, in Gabon or in Congo), or to topple the regimes they consider hostile (e.g. The support provided by *United Fruit* to the mercenaries who were recruited and trained by the CIA in Guatemala, for toppling Colonel Arbenz in 1954), or to participate in their destabilization (e.g. CIA and the International Telephone and Telegraph's cooperation in exacerbating the economic and political difficulties of the Popular Unity government, headed by Salvador Allende in Chile, between 1970 and 1973)."<sup>(54)</sup>

Additionally, multinational corporations have enough resources to lead their own foreign policy, "by establishing a foothold in a host country which is blacklisted by international organizations (such as Pepsico or Total in Burma during the 1990's), or by pressuring

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<sup>54</sup> Guillaume Devin, *Sociologie des relations internationales*, Paris: La Découverte, 2002, 23.

the authorities of the mother country into taking the needed steps to open new markets abroad (e.g. China, Iran, Iraq)."<sup>(55)</sup>

## International actors

Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of actors on the international stage: the first one includes the states; the second, intergovernmental organizations; and the third is related to transnational forces.

In the sections below, we will first tackle the second and third kinds of actors, thereafter, the first.

### Intergovernmental organizations (I.O)

The proliferation and vitality of I.O. are a characteristic of the present international community, to which, we can no longer refer without mentioning these organizations. This intergovernmental network, with its diplomatic conferences, its institutions, its bureaucracy, provides an additional framework for action to the states, without substituting to them.

We firstly observe that the common feature of these organizations is that they were created by the states, and managed by their representatives.

The second observation is that given the equal rights, the I.O. constitute a *safe haven* for small, non-influential actors, who usually derive their *legitimacy* from their participation in these institutions. However, for the powerful actors, the I.O. may sometimes represent an impediment to their action. Let us imagine for example the UN Security Council without the veto system. The most powerful states would be deprived of much of their freedom in action, whereas smaller ones would be able to pass their resolutions without being impeded by the powerful, as they do in the UN General Assembly.

Aside from these common characteristics, there are some differences among intergovernmental organizations, which may be identified based on the following criteria:

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<sup>55</sup>Devin, op. Cit. 23.

- The scope of their functions (e.g., make some comparisons between, say, the UN, NATO, the Arab League, the African Union, etc.)
- The scope of their field of action (continental, transcontinental, universal, regional, commercial, financial, military related, or others).
- Their structure and aptitude to independence, (if one or more states threaten to withdraw from the organization, to what extent will it be affected?)
- Their type of activity, (dialogue and negotiation forum, or services provider?)

A final observation is related to the *status of actor* attributed to these intergovernmental organizations. Theorists have failed to reach consensus on that issue. For some of them, these organizations are autonomous, thus, they can enjoy an international legal personality and assume the role of actor. For others, only a systemic analysis may reveal whether or not the organization is able to transform demands into decisions and act as to influence the course of events. However, those who criticize the independence of intergovernmental organizations question their decision-making capacity. In their opinion, their capacity has nothing to do with decision-making, but just recommendations or resolutions that may remain ineffective, if they are deprived of compulsion. In other words, intergovernmental organizations offer suggestions, while the states are free to adopt them or not. The only exception concerns the Security Council that has the authority under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, to pass binding resolutions through the use of armed forces.<sup>(56)</sup> However this exception is valid only if we omit the veto power, which may impede any resolution, as it happened on numerous occasions. Example: nobody was able till now to make Israel comply to the UN Resolution 242,<sup>(57)</sup> which called the Israeli armed forces to withdraw from the territories they have occupied in 1967, despite all the efforts the Arab states made to obtain it from the UN Security Council. Such inefficiency, shows that I.O. (UN included) depend on the power-balance on the international stage.

The Arab League provides another example of inefficient resolutions. Its Joint Defense Treaty in face of external aggression has never been applied, although Israel perpetrated attacks against several Arab states that signed the Treaty: Iraq in 1981, Lebanon (at least) in 1978, 1982 and 1996, etc. No reaction from other partners in the Treaty. Lastly, it is noteworthy that criticism of intergovernmental organizations is not

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<sup>56</sup> Charter of the United States. Available from: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml> [Accessed July 9, 2012]

<sup>57</sup> Text of the resolution 242 on this link : <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v19/d542>

confined to *small* states. Many US neoconservatives, and even conservatives, have repeatedly criticized the UN seeing no benefit in it. Similarly, UNESCO has not always been supported in the USA. Thus, it would be rather naïve to believe that the neocons' attacks against the UN have not influenced in any way the political behavior of the Bush administration.

There is still another *actor* - or rather factor - on the international stage: it is invisible, yet definitely present with an effectiveness never infirmed. This is the *fear* factor.

Actually, it is impossible to understand for example the nature of the relations that prevailed on the international arena during the Cold War, between the United States and the former Soviet Union, without considering this factor that used to be called at the time: *mutual strategic dissuasion*.<sup>(58)</sup>

Nonetheless, those who insist on the status of *actor* attributed to intergovernmental organizations are not completely wrong. There are indeed some sovereign decisions adopted by these organizations without necessarily referring to member states. For instance, The UNDP and the UNESCO, do not need approval from any party in order to provide assistance to any country, Based on their mandate.

## Transnational forces

Individuals, capitals, commodities, ideas, along with some organizations are part of the transnational flows crossing the boundaries, without necessarily being monitored by governmental authorities. Indeed, authorities do their best to extend their control over these flows which are still capable to escape it, whether fully or partially. Still, the action and interaction of these flows constitute an important part of international networks, making of each of them a full actor. According to the definition suggested by Marcel Merle, the term "transnational forces" means "the movements and currents of solidarity that are of private origins, and that seek to establish themselves across borders, and tend to assert or ensure prevalence of their point of view within the

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<sup>58</sup> Domination may be achieved through suggesting fear. However, this is not just a psychological factor, for if nothing supports the suggestion, it will not work. In order to inspire fear with the notion of deterrence, real means confirming the capacity to completely and definitely destroy the enemy, should be available. When two conflicting parties have equal destruction capacity, such as was the case during the Cold War between the US and the former Soviet Union, then what was really at stake had nothing to do with who would be the first to launch the attack. Both were able to do so. Anyway, whoever possesses weapons of mass destruction can launch an attack. Nevertheless, the real issue is rather: which party will be able to give the last blow? In order to do that, the ability to ensure survival after an atomic attack is the crucial point. Thus, it is not enough to own nuclear weapons, if you don't have the human and technological potential to survive an atomic winter. Nevertheless, this has never been confirmed so far, since the mutual strategic dissuasion had assumed the role of a deterrent.

international system.”<sup>(59)</sup> Yet this definition is limited and general, because not all transnational networks seek to assert a specific stance and make it prevail within the system. Some of them intentionally marginalize themselves vis-a-vis the system while pursuing occult influence across borders. Terrorist groups are but an example: do they attempt to engage in the system or do they rather try to differentiate themselves from it through denunciation and subversion?

It is true that al-Qaeda seeks to assert its viewpoint and make it prevail, especially through modern means of communication. However, this is far from doing it within the system, even if al-Qaeda attempts to use the system. It is rather *on, about,* and surely *against* the system that the terrorist organization works. Let us take the example of a writer. Even if it were a dissident in exile, publishing outside the fatherland, in a foreign language, he (she) still might strive to act from *within* the system and engage in it, in order to assert his (her) viewpoint thanks to this very system, which has given him (her) such an opportunity to act. Such was the case of Alexander Soljenitsyne and other dissidents from ex-USSR, although they never wrote in any other language except Russian, their mother tongue. Similarly, nongovernmental organizations work from within the system and try hard to weigh in on the state or interstates’ apparatuses, to exert influence, although, in principle, they do not have to conform or take instructions from any governmental or intergovernmental authority.

Nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, as well as the international public opinion belong all to the phenomenon of transnational forces. But should we neglect antisocial individuals and groups, who are active on the international stage while seeking to escape governmental control? Mafia, organized crime (drugs, prostitutions, money laundering, and arm smuggling, etc...), separatist or isolationist movements that cast doubt on the state boundaries and sovereignty, terrorist groups, whose field of operations encompasses the entire globe... are not they all making their presence felt on the world arena? Do not they compel states and intergovernmental organizations to take their activity into account? We believe that the answer to these questions is provided by the media: every day the news reports prove that much of the activity of the states and I.O. is to fight against these problems and try to limit them.

“Any individual or group of individuals,” says Merle, “who detains any means of influence are potential actors. They become occasional actors when they decide to use their power on the international stage’s field of action: thus, the banker who makes a foreign investment, the entrepreneur who signs an import or export contract, the writer who publishes a book and the publisher who distributes it abroad, may, even without belonging to an organized group or movement, wield an action on a certain number of mechanisms (the balance of payments, the exchange rate, the standard of living) or

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<sup>59</sup> Marcel Merle, *Sociologie des relations internationales*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Paris: Dalloz, 1988, 386.

values (beliefs, ideologies, etc...) thus becoming part of the international game."<sup>(60)</sup> In this context, it must be noted that one of the most important reactions of the Bush administration after the September 11 attacks, was its attempt to prevent future assaults by freezing all funding sources of Al Qaeda, whether actual or potential, imagined or real. Subsequently, the administration took action on the level of the transnational forces, (individuals, groups, banks, companies and associations supposed to serve as screen, as well as other institutions that may help in money transfer and laundering). Furthermore, the same networks that have served terrorists may also be infiltrated, manipulated or even overturned, so they would serve a different purpose, at the service of the state, although this mode of operation is not acknowledged. This means that the state may be present when least expected. It is common knowledge that some foreign operations - regardless of whether they are of terrorist nature - are either sponsored or directly guided by states. Some even went on accusing the Bush administration of being involved in planning the whole September 11 attacks, and its aftermath, including the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. This leads us now to address the issue of the state as an actor.

## The state as an actor

The first observation that may be made about the State, is that it is an "abstraction," to use Merle's description. However, "states are real"<sup>(61)</sup> and cannot be treated based on an abstractive approach nor they can be defined as being interchangeable units. Their specificities and differences constitute special features which are hard to ignore, even when the theory is inclined toward attaining a sort of a "uniformity of kind." There are indeed several theories about the State, but typological abstraction does not disregard the necessity to highlight the specificities of each state, which emerge clearly when we undertake case studies, comparative studies, or any other research in the field of international relations.

Another observation in this respect is that all states are equal before the law but not in practice. The differentiation between the states may be established on the basis of material characteristics, including geography, demography (population size, population density, as well as ethnic, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity), actual and potential resources, development level, technological and scientific capacities, extent of dependence on external parties, military force, etc. These facts and their consequences cannot be ignored when analyzing the relations between a superpower such as the US

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<sup>60</sup> Marcel Merle, op. Cit. 386.

<sup>61</sup> Marcel Merle, op. Cit. 321.

and Middle Eastern states. If these facts were not conspicuously present in the *said* (i.e. official discourse), then they are certainly in the *unsaid*. These realities will always be present as long as the relations between states are subject to the balance of power, just as the relations among humans are.

Besides these material differences, there are other distinctive characteristics related to the political regime (autocracy, democracy, etc.), the economy (liberal, state directed, or other), the prevailing ideology (management, militancy, etc.), the attitude toward the outside world (openness, introversion, alliances, neutrality, etc.), and the age (old states, post-colonial states, new states, etc.)

More than mere specificities of each state, these differences also define the rank in the hierarchy of roles on the international arena. Merle classifies the states into four categories:

- "The states-actors, capable of playing a world role."
- "The states willing to play a world role but whose capacities reduce their influence to a particular sector in international relations."
- "The states which have neither ambition nor a chance to play a world role, but which nevertheless are able to act as regional leaders."
- "The states that, because of their smallness or weakness, cannot pretend to more than a local role, that is to maintain their independence and protect their territories."<sup>(62)</sup>

To these four categories, let us add a fifth: that of the failed states. This category is taken into account whenever it comes to providing assistance or to intervening in one way or another. Each year, US foreign-policy experts publish the Failed States Index,<sup>(63)</sup> which is used to draw the attention of policy makers and diplomats to certain developments so to anticipate a course of action. In this context, it is surprising, and even shocking, to see that Iraq ranked fifth<sup>(64)</sup> on the Failed States Index in 2008, whereas the US intervention, according to the theories prevailing at the time, was supposed to propel this country to the forefront of democratic states having significant political and economic development potential.

However, since interventions on the international stage are supposed to take place within a legal frame of reference, we will briefly examine this issue. This is particularly necessary given that the Bush doctrine, mixing preemptive and preventive wars, seems to have found a loophole in one of international law dogmas, which is the principle of

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<sup>62</sup> Marcel Merle, op. Cit. 325-330.

<sup>63</sup> Index available on the Fund for Peace website: <http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/?q=fsi> [Accessed May 11, 2012]

<sup>64</sup> In 2008, Iraq ranked immediately after Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Chad respectively. In 2011, the situation in Iraq improved and it was therefore ranked ninth according to the Index.

sovereignty. This principle has anyway greatly suffered from the effects of globalization, which, in turn, contributed in creating a new vision of geopolitics.

## The legal approach

In the sixteenth century, in *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1576), Jean Bodin defined the concept of sovereignty as “the power to command and coerce, but persons who are sovereign must not be subject in any way to the commands or coercion of any party on earth...” (65)

Legal positivism makes of the states “no longer the object but also the subject *par excellence* of the law of which they are the recipients, and by the effect of a simple fiction, they become equal 'persons' before the law.”<sup>(66)</sup> Yet, this would not be possible without a prior recognition of the sovereignty dogma. That is the very basis upon which the “principle of sovereign equality,” is stated in Article 2, § 1 of the UN Charter.

If this principle is seen to be in control of the reality of the state in general, then international laws would be only a nice fabric of conventions and recommendations with no decisive compulsory procedures. Nevertheless, the states, in general, respect their obligations as well as the code of conduct. When this is not the case, the other states may re-act to any violation and punish the aggressor through joint action. But in fact, the sovereignty dogma has been –and will still be– facing increasing difficulties, because of the very evolution of international politics. Interdependence, interaction, multinational corporations, globalization, as well as other factors have eroded the so-called sovereignty of states, compelling them to make compromises defying any claim “to command and coerce,” without “be subject in any way to the commands or coercion of any party on earth.”

Nevertheless, within the context of recent developments, it is not the sole sovereignty that is questioned, but also a number of rules that had been enacted until 1945 by a minority of dominant states (e.g. the United Nations System,) and whose amendment is

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<sup>65</sup> Jean Bodin, *Les six livres de la République*, [online]. Available from: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k536293> [Accessed May 11, 2012]

<sup>66</sup> Marcel Merle, op. Cit. 34.

demanded by other states that are not necessarily the poorest or the least developed,(e.g. Japan and Germany).

Still, the issue arising from the evolution of the current international system, the globalization, and the crises and conflicts, is the following: is the territorial state outdated ? We do not need to emphasize the relevance of this issue regarding our subject. If, from the whole Bush era, we keep in mind only September 11, and the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, it would still be obvious how the territorial state has been completely exceeded.

## Is the territorial state outdated ?

Daniel-Louis Seiler starts from the definition of the state by Max Weber, making of the territorial interest something central to his sociology. Weber describes the hegemonic group as being: "a political association [*politischer Verband*], insofar as its existence and the validity of its orders within a given geographical area are continually guaranteed through the application and threat of physical force on the part of its administrative staff."<sup>(67)</sup> Commenting on this definition, Seiler says: "the fact that he views it as the most rational, thereby favored by the world disenchantment, does not correspond anymore to today's reality."<sup>(68)</sup>

Consequently, if the territorial state did not vanish, it is no longer the only entity claiming control over territories. This is clarified at least by three examples:

- First, there is a general recognition, on the one hand, that "even weakened, the states are still far from disappearing completely." On the other hand, "states are no longer representative of the only mode of territorial control. The European Union for example has come to palliate the deficiencies in the state-related mode, and within it, the Schengen area attempts to close off a certain geographic region through the use of licit physical coercion."<sup>(69)</sup>

- Second, Seiler makes the same observation about the United States, although this time it is the external factors that cast doubts on the degree of territorial control by the state, in a particularly aggressive manner, that is opposed to the European process - supposed to be internal and voluntary. For Seiler, "the emotion [...] provoked by the

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<sup>67</sup> Max Weber, *Economie et Société*, tome I, Paris, Plon/Agora, 96- 97.

<sup>68</sup> Daniel-Louis Seiler, *La méthode comparative en science politique*, ed. Dalloz- Armand Colin, Paris 2004, 39.

<sup>69</sup> Seiler, op. Cit. 30-40.

acts of war perpetrated in 2001 against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon – added to the vast number of victims - resulted from the fact that these attacks took place at the heart of the US territory, thus revealing the deficiencies of the US internal system of territorial control.”<sup>(70)</sup>

- The third form of state exceedance observed by Seiler is related to Islam. He says, “the dream of restoring the *Khilafah* (Caliphate) cherished by fundamentalist Islamist networks attests certainly of their territorial interest. The concept of *Dar al-Islam* (house/abode of Islam,) asserts itself not only through these truly globalized networks, but also by means of the oppression exerted by some Islamic states that are US allies(...) against other religions - including the People of the Book (or People of the Scriptures, i.e. Jews and Christians) protected by Islam – and as well against impiety manifestations.”<sup>(71)</sup>

Here we come back to the theme of “morals” so prized by neocons; but instead of linking it only to interests we will also link it to the international arena. Indeed, if neoconservatives talked first of moralizing domestic US politics, then, how about international relations?

## Morals and international politics

This issue is of great importance because referring to morals keeps on recurring adamantly, as the analysis of the *Bush Doctrine* and neo-conservatism will show later. However, the issue of Morals and international politics is also related to the use of force and the differentiation between ends and means. This is not a new issue, but a classical one, since Machiavelli was one of the first European writers to raise it, well before the modern era. Furthermore, Modernity itself might not be well explained without a deep understanding of the evolution of morals.<sup>(72)</sup>

What distinguishes modernity is that the nature of international problems has changed as compared to previous times, since the state power was confirmed as a sovereign

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<sup>70</sup> Seiler, op. Cit. 40.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>72</sup> This was the topic of Charles Taylor in *Sources of the self*, where he attempts to carry out a research on morals similar to the work of Thomas Kuhn in sciences (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions): i.e. studying, defining, and systematically classifying the moral thought since the early Greeks, until the period called postmodernism. He also analyzed philosophical, historical, literary, artistic, and political aspects of thought. He reached interesting findings about human moral evolution. See: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

model in face of religious authorities.<sup>(73)</sup> On the one hand, traditional spiritual unity became out of context in modernity, and its rupture marked a historic milestone in the birth of the secular conception of power. On the other hand, the history of evolution toward modernity- and even toward post-modernism - is at once the history of moral evolution, according to Taylor. Moral demands do not concern only the individuals. The life of societies as well as the international life are no less subject to deep moral reflection. In this domain, it is true that religions had had their say. Yet, modernity morals does not claim to find its sources in religious texts, but rather in law, which actually stems from following the Cult of Reason.

This moral thinking touched on many aspects of international politics. To take an example, the use of military force has always been subject to criticism, ever since Cicero. This is how the theory of *just war* emerged, which Thomas Aquinas addressed in his *Summary of Theology (Summa Theologiae)*. The use of force, according to this theory, has to meet three joint conditions: the right capacity, the right cause, and the right intention.

The first condition aims at confining the use of arms to the legal authority. The second condition has not always gathered consensus, which seems all the more difficult to achieve that there is no objective criterion able to determine the righteousness of a cause. As for the third condition, it is obviously addressed to the conscience of the prince.

This theory seems to be the support behind the current distinction between wars of self-defense, (admitted by Article 51 of the UN Charter) and wars of aggression condemned by various texts of positive law.

Throughout history, moral demands covered various topics including: condemning wars, eradicating slavery, criticizing colonialism, struggling for a new division of labor and an international redistribution of wealth, fighting for human rights, democracy, dismissal of the nuclear option and disarmament, etc. Nonetheless, if most of these demands were not necessarily instigated by religions, failure to fulfill them has often been attributed to cultural differences and conflicting beliefs. In other words, the deficiency causing the

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<sup>73</sup> Alain Touraine, emphasized this aspect in his *Critique of the modernity*. Although we are here concerned by the political aspects of this evolution, one cannot ignore that modernity owes much to Friedrich Nietzsche, alongside Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, the three intellectuals who had a crucial influence on this domain. For indeed, morals has not been considered the same way after their time. The three thinkers broke with the vision that contemporaneous theorists had of the world. The implications of this rupture are still apparent today, influencing other thinkers such as Marcuse, Foucault, Habermas, and Fromm among many others. See: Alain Touraine : *Critique de la modernité*. Fayard ; Paris, 1992.

failure of a moral prescription might not be due to its content, but rather to our own representations of the reality, quite opposed to each other. This gives a negative answer to the question previously raised: when religious movements come to be engrafted on the society's political structure, so that they highly influence international interaction, in the absence of regulatory institutions able to address subsequent problems, then how would be the reactions? We think that each party would respond from its own cultural determinisms (i.e. frames of reference).

"History has known crusades and religious wars," says Marcel Merle, "and we have no reason to think that these phenomena have come to an end."<sup>(74)</sup> This is quite plausible, because even within a single religion, consensus is almost impossible between extremists and moderates, and between various factions and theological trends: i.e. Sunnis versus Shiites, Catholics versus Protestants, and so forth. Against Kant's dream of a universal morals based on the principle of categorical imperative, raise the voices of the followers of different religions and moralities. Merle also notes that "there is no single morals, but a number of moralities which are in conflict, on the international scene as well as in the daily existence of states or in the private lives of individuals."<sup>(75)</sup>

At the international level, peace and justice supposed to be two precious values which all actors strive to achieve, are difficult to reconcile. Giving priority to one of them might affect negatively the other. As it happens sometimes, while striving to settle peace and security in a country, justice gets sacrificed, which is a misfortune. Likewise, while striving to establish justice by all means, we may thus allow the eruption of war and instability. For moralists, such a choice should not be allowed. Efforts must be exerted to reach both goals simultaneously.

That is easier to say than to do, think the realist school authors. Morals therefore should be relativized. For in day-to-day practice, politicians are compelled to make painful choices. They cannot always stay *neutral* or adopt a *comfortable* stance which might be seen as a weakness. Nothing can be more harmful to a statesman than portraying him as being weak, particularly during a crisis. And it is usually during the crises that we are compelled to make choices.

Undoubtedly, this also was the dilemma of US foreign policy during the Bush era. The logic behind it is as simple as inflexible. Let us imagine the president of the United States unable to fiercely react to an attack perpetrated against his country, and let us imagine him hesitant and anxious. What would happen then? US citizens would simply

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<sup>74</sup> Marcel Merle, op. Cit. 19.

<sup>75</sup> Merle, op. Cit. 20.

lose their faith in their government. The Congress may even revolt against the president. Accordingly, in the aftermath of September 11 attacks, could Bush (or another) afford to let the Taliban free to host a terrorist basis whose declared goal was to launch painful strikes against the USA? The answer seems to us clear: the American people, who are hard to satisfy anyway, and who still blame Bush for his failure to completely eradicate the terrorist threat despite two consecutive wars launched against Afghanistan and Iraq, most probably would not have forgiven him if he had not reacted at all. His position would have been critical, if he had projected during the crisis the image of a helpless America, incapable of reprisals.

A president using force to launch a *preemptive*, a *preventive* or a *proactive* war, raises fear and criticism. A president allowing terrorists to act freely, or states to host or sponsor them, without reacting, would provoke contempt. Between criticism and contempt, Bush opted for the former.

Finally, the problem with the moralist attitude is that it does not provide any interpretation to the difficulties encountered, but rather divides the world in terms of good and evil. To this effect, Bush was trying to imitate the position of the moralists, but he did not stop there. Moralists do not tell us what is the cause of evil, they only indicate its existence. However to fight evil or to bypass it, some choices have to be adopted. And in order to make the right choice (based on the three above mentioned conditions), there should be a sound understanding of evil roots so to give the good diagnosis. In this context, one can better understand why the *Bush Doctrine* provoked such a polemic that focused on morals as related to law and power, especially when the concept of a *just war* is used to justify a *preventive* or a *preemptive* war. This very *doctrine* poses the issue, to the observers, linked to the concept of power, since it is all the same about power balance involving a Superpower (USA), and small third world countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.)

Thus, we can note that what opponents and critics reprove in Bush policy is precisely its basic principle: neoconservatives claim that it is moral and legitimate for the USA to act unilaterally, when necessary, against states threatening the interests or the people of America through their collusion with terrorists, or even on a suspicion of handing out weapons of mass destruction or any other kind of support to terrorists. Whereas opponents of such policy object that it is neither moral nor legal for a Superpower, such as the US, to use its resources in order to change the regimes of countries with whom there is disagreement, on a simple suspicion without any evidence. Replying to such a charge, the neoconservatives and the *hawks* in the Bush administration say: should we remain idle waiting for terrorists to strike again our people and interests, in order to

have *evidence*, and ask for the UN green light, and gather a coalition, before lastly reacting, leaving meanwhile thus enough time for the terrorists to hide and protect themselves? And so goes the controversy on and on.

The political problem thus appears in its twofold dimension: the moral and the legal. On the one hand, there is the use of force, and on the one hand, there is the law that guarantees the rights of the states and the individuals.

Finally, it must be admitted that social relations, as well as relations between societies and states reflect to a great extent a very complex reality, whose roots are deeply entrenched in the economic interests. Without exaggerating the economic aspect and making it surpass other aspects of human, social and international intercourse, the sociology of international relations (even sociology, merely) cannot disregard the contributions of thinkers who showed how the economic, social and ideological systems are very closely interrelated. Thus, if one attempts to analyze the Bush policy in the Middle East, or that of any other American president without linking it to the infrastructure, and the financial, commercial, industrial and military networks of influence, one would fail to grasp the fundamental mechanisms of political action on both national and international levels. It is to analyze such topics that we dedicate Part Two of this work.

## Conclusion and key findings

This introductory chapter attempted to show how we can move from *micro* to *macro*, specifically in sociology, and in social sciences generally, in order to understand the nature of both the action and the system. The interaction between *micro* and *macro* occurs through the actor, whether an individual, a group, an institution or a state. Therefore, our need to understand *Action* at the level of relations between groups, regions, states, institutions and individuals - which constitutes the social fabric as well as the national and transnational networks - requires theoretical interdisciplinary efforts as well as an alternation between microsociology and macrosociology.

Below are the key findings of this chapter. Yet, we hardly need to emphasize that some of the remarks mentioned here represent a simple outline that will help while exploring the issues to be raised later.

- The neoconservative intellectuals are not *Weberian*, since they do not rule out the use of violence as a political tool, which applies to Islamists as well.

- The ethics of responsibility and the ethics of conviction are no longer antithetic, whether for Islamists or neoconservatives.
- Politics particularly permits in many cases, to conceal material interests under either a moralist or idealistic cover.
- In power-connected social networks, all relations are based on material interests and US foreign policy cannot be interpreted outside of this context.
- The submerged part of the American politics' iceberg has to be sought on the side of the interests and the networks they create.
- The key to understanding the dynamics of international relations lies in the mutual interaction between economy and politics.
- We cannot quantify power, therefore we analyze its networks.
- Social relations, various claims and demands, and representations are channeled through interest groups, whose importance far exceeds the level of domestic policy to reach out and influence decisively foreign policy.
- If it is true that the work of interest groups depends on internal determinisms, and if foreign policy is somewhat responsive to the requirements of such determinisms; then it would also be true that the interaction with the outside world will create new pressures and determinisms that will affect overall administrative policies, not just foreign policy.
- The external unresolved problems, in which the US is strongly involved, may cause a chain of reactions that could evolve from bad to worse.
- The international system cannot solve problems outside the legal-moral framework. It has no other means of influencing an interaction that does not reveal its real "birth certificate," as its connections to religious symbols seems to be often concealed by a discourse focusing on *mutual interests*, cooperation, support funds, or *controversial funds*.
- One of the essential goals of the *Bush Doctrine* consisted in seeking the *legal support* necessary for military intervention, through a confusion between the concepts of *preemptive war* and *preventive war*.
- Deficiency of the Bush strategy : its indifference to human rights just when the US was intervening in the Middle East.
- Because it expressed an elitist vision for change ( under the influence of Leo Strauss), such a strategy promoted "change from above" with the assistance of tanks and planes, which did not sound very moral. Thus, it projected an image of invaders not liberators, and isolated the US in the Middle East at the same moment when it believed it was dominating it.

