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DIPLOMARBEIT

To Bomb Or To Talk

Developing Countries As Topics In The U.S. Presidential Election 2008

Verfasserin

Jasmin Malekpour

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, Februar 2010

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 057 390

Studienrichtung lt. Zulassungsbescheid:

Internationale Entwicklung

Betreuerin:

Dr.ⁱⁿ Silvia Michal-Misak

*Für meine Eltern ...
ohne eure bedingungslose Unterstützung und Liebe hätte ich nicht der Mensch werden
können, der ich heute gerne bin, nicht die Ziele erreicht, die ich mir erträumt habe und
nicht die Möglichkeiten nutzen können, die ihr mir geboten habt. Danke.*

*Für meine Oma ...
ohne dich wäre mein Leben um viele Erfahrungen ärmer gewesen. Danke, dass du immer
für mich da warst, für deine "deutsche Gründlichkeit", die ich mir zumindest sprachlich
zu Eigen machen konnte und für all die schönen Erinnerungen.*

*Für Gerald ...
ohne dich wäre ich nur halb, but you complete me. Danke für nächtelange Diskussionen,
die Erweiterung meines geistigen und unseres reisetechischen Horizontes, carrots and
sticks whenever necessary, und für deine Liebe.*

*Danke an Dr.ⁱⁿ Silvia Michal-Misak. Für die Betreuung und Nachsicht und ihre Geduld,
die ich wohl stark strapaziert haben muss.*

*Danke den Lehrenden der Internationalen Entwicklung, die mein Studium begleiteten,
mein Interesse weckten und mir neue Möglichkeiten eröffneten,
insbesondere Wiebke Sievers, Gerald Hödl und Karin Fischer.
Und ein besonderes Danke an Elke Christiansen.*

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Acronyms

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
AEI	American Enterprise Institute
AFRICOM	Unified Combatant Command for Africa
AGOA	Africa Growth and Opportunity Act
AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAR	Central African Republic
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNAS	Center for a New American Security
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
EU	European Union
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GDI	Gender-Related Development Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GOP	Gallant/Grand Old Party (= Republican Party)
GWOT	global war on terror
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IDA	International Development Association
IDP	internally displaced person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti (= Committee for State Security)
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MKO	Mujahedin-e Khalq
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP	National Congress Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIE	US National Intelligence Estimate

Acronyms

NIF	National Islamic Front
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NPR	National Public Radio
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODA	official development aid
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief
POW	prisoner of war
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
SAVAK	Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar (= National Intelligence and Security Organization)
SFRC	Senate Foreign Relations Committee
SLM/A	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SU	Soviet Union
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
UNAID	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAMID	African Union - United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar

1. Introduction

On November 4, 2008, the citizens of the United States of America (U.S.) elected their 44th president. In the first open seat election¹ since 1928² Barack Obama and John McCain competed in their run for office. While domestic policy naturally played an important role in the election campaigns, foreign policy was more prevalent than might have been expected beforehand. Not only the ongoing war in Iraq, but also several other *hot spots* such as Afghanistan, Iran, or Darfur were repeatedly on the agenda.

The worldwide impact and importance of a change in the U.S. presidency might often be strongly over-emphasized and over-estimated by supporters and critics alike. Nonetheless, there is no denying of the repercussions on and potential influence of U.S. foreign policy. The president's constitutionally guaranteed primacy in foreign affairs leaves many observers, especially onlookers of U.S. politics, with the impression of a truly *imperial presidency*³. Whereas this notion might need to come under more scrutiny, it nevertheless embodies an essential truth. U.S. foreign policy, with the U.S. president being its most prominent and more often than not its most important decision maker, influences world politics like hardly any other institution.

This thesis joins a broad spectrum of analyses on the topic of U.S. presidency and a president's foreign policy. It aims to draw a comparison of proposed development policies between the two major candidates for this office in the 2008 election: the Democratic nominee Barack Obama and his vice presidential running mate Joe Biden and the Republican candidate John McCain supported by Sarah Palin.

More than one year has passed since election day. The campaigns have ended, the election is over and the United States has bid farewell to President George W. Bush several

¹ Both President George W. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney vacated their offices without participating as contenders in the 2008 presidential election. Therefore, both offices were open for non-incumbents.

² The last "true" presidential open seat election took place in 1928. The 1952 election was also an open-seat contest. However, President Harry S. Truman as well as Vice President Alben Barkley participated in the Democratic primaries but failed to secure their party's nomination (David 1954, 33-40; 55-66).

³ The term *imperial presidency* was coined by historian Arthur M. Schlesinger in his 1973 seminal book of the same name which discusses the U.S. presidency's exceedance of limits set by the Constitution, especially concerning foreign policy (Schlesinger 1973). See also chapter 2.

1. Introduction

months ago. Barack Obama succeeded him and made history by becoming the first African-American president⁴.

This begs the question whether the aim of this thesis is actually still relevant. A comparative analysis of a race run might at first sight seem superfluous. When looking back on history, hardly anyone will remember the names of those candidates who were not fortunate enough to be elected to the offices they were striving for. Only policy pundits recall presidential nominees such as Adlai Stevenson who ran against Dwight D. (“Ike”) Eisenhower on a Democratic ticket in two consecutive elections each time suffering a crushing loss. The same holds true for Walter Mondale or Michael Dukakis respectively. Then why look at those who never gained the impact they were striving for?

While it is true that those coming second in presidential elections consequently could not directly translate their ideas into public policy, nonetheless they often had lasting influence as leaders or major players of the opposition. And even if this should not be the case with John McCain, he still posed an alternative. An alternative to the policies Barack Obama intended to and, respectively, is bound to realize. This thesis underlines the fact that there actually was a choice the American public had to make. It will depict this choice between two alternatives which at first glance could not be any more different. However, it will also highlight certain similarities caused by common constraints and variables.

Due to the topic’s recency this paper is predominantly based on a media analysis. Whereas numerous publications were used for outlining the theoretic approach to U.S. foreign policy and the background information given on countries discussed, most of the data attesting to the candidates’ positions derives from online resources. The entire televised Democratic and Republican primary debates as well as the three presidential debates between John McCain and Barack Obama and the vice presidential debate between Sarah

⁴ Although most of the politicians referenced in this paper today hold different offices than they did at the time of election, I will refer to them as holders of the positions before the election took place as this is the time frame this analysis is set in; e.g. President Obama was the Illinois Junior Senator and the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee during the campaign. Sarah Palin has since resigned from her post as Governor of Alaska and Delaware’s Senior Senator and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Joe Biden has become Vice President of the U.S., whereas Republican nominee John McCain remained U.S. Senator from Arizona.

Palin and Joe Biden proved invaluable for this thesis. Transcripts to all these debates have been published either by the respective broadcasting channels, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) or the Commission on Presidential Debates. The campaigns neither authenticated nor contested these records. In the course of my research, I cross-checked all the transcripts against video recordings of the debates and validated their content. The same *modus operandi* was used for speeches given by the candidates. Campaign websites were among other relevant materials analyzed. To ensure an academic quality despite this paper's topicality, scientific journals and U.S. think tank publications across the political spectrum were chosen as further resources.

Election promises given in debates, stump speeches and campaign materials obviously do not constitute a future track record but they prove to be valuable sources as to politicians' underlying ideologies, values and political focal points. Furthermore, they are the fundamental point of reference for the voting public. At the same time, one has to keep in mind that programs do not only reflect a candidate's personal preferences but also include concessions to his or her constituency. Therefore, several polls will be cited to contrast advocated policies with public opinion. Educated decisions on whom to elect have to take candidates' previous voting records into consideration. Where applicable, this will be done here as well.

Development policies are as neglected a topic in the U.S. as they are in Austria or the European Union. They hardly ever make headlines, stir public discussions, or are addressed in election campaigns. Nonetheless, they constitute an essential part of foreign policy in general. While clearly separated in budgets, administrated by different institutions and distinguishable on a theoretical level, in practice these policies collide, intermingle and complement one another. At first glance, both Barack Obama's and John McCain's propositions for *their* presidency do not yield much information concerning developmental approaches. But taking a closer look at their programs, speeches and statements, plenty of resources grant invaluable insight into what the so-called Third World might have to expect from either president's tenure.

Foreign policy encompasses a broad field of topics. Therefore, a necessary thematic reduction and confinement to the scope of development policies will be undertaken. Furthermore, only certain aspects of development policies can be analyzed in detail here. In

1. Introduction

order to allow for an in depth look rather than giving a brief overview, a regional focus on the Middle East encompassing five case studies as well as a sixth case study on Africa will serve as the basis for a direct comparison between the two alternatives American voters were given on their ballots. The choice of region is based not solely on my personal preference, although this obviously constituted an incentive. In my studies I laid a focus on the Middle East, its history, religion, culture and politics. This interest was also born out of my personal background as a half-Persian Austrian. Nonetheless, the relevance of the Middle East in today's world politics can hardly be exasperated. Especially for the United States, this region has been a major focal point of foreign and development policies – an aspect which will be further explored in chapter 6.

Pessimistic observers, especially from outside the U.S., lamented that there was virtually no difference between the two presidential candidates or that, even if differences were acknowledged, nothing would change anyhow. I strongly reject this notion. Although the public may feel powerless against a sitting government or president, as electorate it is presented with the possibility to change direction through a ballot. By denying that the public has to make a choice between different options elections would become obsolete. In reality, the American people had to make their own difficult decision which will shape not only their lives but also influence those of millions of people in the so-called Third World.

This paper will answer the central research question on whether considerable differences existed between the two contenders' development policies. By analyzing their approaches and prescriptions the most important dissimilarities will be identified and verify the hypothesis that Barack Obama's and John McCain's policies on development are strongly disparate.

2. The System of U.S. Presidential Elections

Elections, in essence, can be reduced to the simple explanation that one person is asking another one for their support (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 508). This ostensibly simple action is blown up to a multiple-year, highly complex, full scale extravaganza in the United States. Primarily, this is owed to the fact that unlike most European democracies the U.S. undergoes a partially different process to determine who holds the country's highest office.

The dissimilarities do not stop at the election system. Voter turnout is substantially lower in the U.S. than in any other Western democracy. On average, more than 70% of eligible voters cast their ballots in these countries while in the U.S. this rate drops below 50%. Explanations for this anomaly are manifold. Mostly it is attributed to the high number of different elections U.S. citizens are eligible to participate in (ibid., 464).

The U.S. Presidential Election takes place every four years on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, 37). However, the process to determine the next U.S. President is set in motion several years in advance. Already in 2005, one year after President Bush's victory over Democratic nominee John Kerry, predictions about Bush's successor were made, books were written, and stocks in potential candidates were traded in political future markets (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 507-508).

The process of electing the President is essentially divided into four stages:

- (1) the prenomination phase, in which candidates compete in state primary elections and caucuses for delegates to the national party conventions;
- (2) the national conventions—held in the summer of the election year—in which the two major parties nominate candidates for President and Vice President and ratify a platform of the parties' policy positions and goals;
- (3) the general election campaign, in which the major party nominees, as well as any minor party or independent contenders, compete for votes from the entire electorate, culminating in the popular vote on election day in November; and
- (4) the electoral college phase, in which the President and Vice President are officially elected. (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, ii)

2. The System of U.S. Presidential Elections

Especially the prenomination phase and the general election campaign yield the most opportunities to analyze a candidate's policy propositions, plans and values. "Elections take the pulse of average people and gauge their hopes and fears; they provide direction for government action; and they hold the nation's leaders accountable" (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 462). Conveying their messages to the electorate, candidates try to sway public opinion in their direction, particularly during primaries and caucuses, culminating in the general campaign.

The first phase of a U.S. presidential election is preceded by years of prearrangements. Presidential hopefuls assess their chances in races for other offices, raise money and support, and test the ground for a potential prenomination campaign. Many contenders drop out of the race rather quickly; others officially announce their candidacy (Hershey 2007, 175).

When the primary elections start, the field narrows down to approximately a dozen or less candidates for each of the two major parties⁵. "In primary elections voters decide which of the candidates within a party will represent the party in the general election" (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 477). Each state decides independently on the method parties should use to determine their candidates. Nowadays, decisions in the state contests of the prenomination phase are reached mainly through primaries but caucuses are also still in use. This participatory method of decision-making has also changed and become more open and inclusive. In Iowa, for example, party members still meet in caucuses – in town halls, gymnasiums, or private homes they openly discuss their preferences for candidates, try to convince each other of their opinions and finally arrive at a majority decision through strongly regulated mechanisms (ibid., 481-482).

Over the course of time, the more exclusive practice of caucuses open only to selected party activists has been widely replaced by primary elections. Primaries can be open or closed. The former admits any eligible voter in the respective state to the ballot of one party and therefore gives party affiliates as well as independents the possibility to participate in the decision who will become a party's presidential candidate. The latter, on the other hand, is restricted to a party's registered members.

⁵ *De lege* the U.S. has a multi-party system; *de facto* it is a two-party system. Election laws, as well as the need for excessive financial funds to run a successful campaign pose a virtually insurmountable barrier for any third party.

The importance of these public or semi-public processes highlights “[t]he decline of party leader dominance over the nominating process” (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, 2). Once, national conventions were the center of attention of the presidential nomination process. Party officials and delegates selected a party’s nominee out of several hopefuls at the conventions. Over time, *inter alia*, the need for higher transparency and inclusiveness gradually changed the system. Today, the field of potential presidential candidates is reduced by primary after primary. States tend to choose ever earlier dates for holding their primaries and caucuses causing *front-loading* of the decision process (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 483-484). Constituencies voting in late primaries might not be able to further influence the process as the decision might have already been made for them (Hershey 2007, 181-182). Further, most candidates drop out of the expensive and exhausting race rather sooner than later (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, 20).

Essentially, in the prenomination phase, the electorate does not choose candidates directly but instead elects delegates to the conventions, who represent their states and cast their votes for the presidential candidate chosen by the voters in their respective states (Hershey 2007, 175). Each party holds its National Nomination Convention which can now be seen mostly as a “ratifying body” of a choice already made in primaries and caucuses. (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, 4). “The out-of-power party traditionally holds its convention first, in late July, followed in mid-August by the party holding the White House” (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 484). Furthermore, conventions serve as perfectly orchestrated, highly publicized performances and depictions of presidential candidates. Prominent keynote addresses, campaign commercials, the presentation of the nominee’s vice presidential choice, and nomination and acceptance speeches have long replaced the secluded party conclave atmosphere (Hershey 2007, 185-187). The “unifying convention” has more of a symbolic character focusing on the demonstration of a party’s closeness and concord (Filzmaier/Plasser 2001, 25).

Finally, after almost two years of party-internal prenomination procedures the actual general election campaign officially starts off. In this comparatively short period of three months, the two presidential nominees and their massive campaign machines compete for votes incessantly. Facing each other in televised debates might be the most important and decisive part of these last few weeks which culminate in Election Day (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, 16, 34, 37).

Apart from securing their party's nomination, presidential candidates also have to fulfill other qualifications to be eligible to run for president. "Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution specifies that [...] a person must be a natural-born citizen of the United States, at least 35 years of age, and a resident of the United States for at least 14 years" (ibid., 2).

2.1. The Presidential Election 2008

On November 4, 2008 the United States chose its 44th president. Several features made this election unique. It was the first time in history that two sitting Senators competed for the highest office (Wingfield 2008). Furthermore, it was the first open-seat election since 1928 and the first time that constituents had the chance to vote for an African-American president or a female Republican vice president. In addition, voter turnout was the highest in years, with over 60% of eligible voters casting their ballots (Gans 2008, 1).

The timetable of the 2008 election was even more front-loaded than it had been in previous election years (Stateline.org 2008). After the Iowan caucuses on January 3 and the New Hampshire primaries on January 8 opened the 2008 pre-nomination elections, the field of potential candidates quickly narrowed down to only a handful of hopefuls for each party. Already before Super Tuesday most candidates withdrew their candidacy. The first Tuesday in February – in 2008, February 5 - dubbed Super Tuesday, was believed to bring about an early decision as 24 states held their primaries and caucuses simultaneously (Schneider 2007). Nevertheless, no candidate secured their party's nomination on that date.

The Democratic field started off with eight potential candidates: Barack Obama, U.S. Senator from Illinois, Hillary Clinton, U.S. Senator from New York, John Edwards, former U.S. Senator from North Carolina, Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico, Dennis Kucinich, U.S. Representative from Ohio, Joe Biden, U.S. Senator from Delaware, Mike Gravel, former U.S. Senator from Alaska, Christopher Dodd, U.S. Senator from Connecticut, Tom Vilsack, former Governor of Iowa, and Evan Bayh, U.S. Senator from Indiana. Already before Super Tuesday, five of them dropped out of the race. Mike Gra-

vel eventually joined the Liberal Party in March 2008, leaving Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton as the only candidates. Although the favors were tilting towards Senator Obama, Senator Clinton did not suspend her campaign until June 7, when she endorsed her challenger for the nomination (Weisman/Balz 2008).

Surprising for many political analysts, the Republican Party secured its nomination quicker than the Democrats with John McCain becoming the GOP's – the so-called *Gal-lant* or *Grand Old Party* (GOP 2009) – official candidate already after Super Tuesday, when his second to last challenger, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, withdrew his candidacy. Although former Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas did not announce his withdrawal until March 4, 2008, Senator McCain's victory was evident before then. Most of the originally twelve official Republican candidates had withdrawn from the race prior to Super Tuesday, including former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani who was initially believed to become the front runner but failed devastatingly in early primaries (NBC/msnbc.com/news services 2008).

The importance of campaign debates has been rising constantly throughout the years. Both parties held dozens of televised debates. Fifteen out of the GOP's 21 televised debates were held prior to the beginning of the prenomination elections. The numbers for the Democratic Party were even higher. Out of a total of 26 public debates, seventeen took place before January 5, 2008.

In general, these highly publicized events offer voters from all around the country an easily accessible possibility to see *their* candidates perform on a regular basis. However, invitations to join these debates are often not issued to all candidates of a party but only to those performing best in opinion polls. Therefore, a certain self-perpetuation of media-influence has to be acknowledged because restrictions to cover only *high achievers* even further reduces airtime of less known candidates. Furthermore, "[...] the combined influence of the media and the proliferation of primaries (with their mass audience) seem to foster an emphasis on candidate image over substantive issues" (Coleman/Cantor/Neale 2000, 16). The same inevitable criticism is applicable to the 2008 race.

2. The System of U.S. Presidential Elections

During the general election campaign four official debates were held. Democratic Presidential Nominee Barack Obama and Republican Presidential Nominee John McCain faced each other on television three times. In addition, both running mates, Senator Joe Biden and Governor Sarah Palin, met in a separate televised debate (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008d).

After three months of a heated election campaign, the American people *voted for change*. On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama was elected as 44th president of the United States. He captured a sweeping victory, gaining ten million more votes (representing approximately 7% of votes cast) than his challenger John McCain (Federal Election Commission 2009).

3. Foreign Policy and the Presidency

While this thesis focuses on development policy, it is quite difficult to separate foreign policy from development policy in the context analyzed. Politicians base their development strategies – if they even have a position on this topic – on their general political views, the school of thought they belong to, their ideologies and other motivators. In particular religious motivation has to be mentioned in this context. In addition, development policies are seldom clearly voiced. Often, if at all, they appear as a minor subheading in foreign policy statements. Nothing other than that was the case with the two parties' presidential nominees in the 2008 election. Therefore, it will be necessary to assess Barack Obama's and John McCain's stance on foreign policy within a broader spectrum of U.S. schools of thought in this area. But at first, this chapter will clarify the presidential role in the making of foreign policy.

In an American presidential election, just as in any other presidential or parliamentary election, development politics are secondary. Compared to Austrian elections however, foreign policy plays an important part in the constituency's decisions⁶. The conventional wisdom that in elections domestic policy always outclasses foreign policy might have lost its legitimacy in today's globalized and therefore interconnected world (Miller 2004, 40). McKenna and Feingold argue that "[...] a major element in the outcome of the presidential election of 2008 will be how the American electorate perceives America's future role in the world" (McKenna/Feingold 2008, 399). This role will be built largely on how the U.S. treats Third World Countries, how it addresses security threats and on its actions in the Middle East after the Bush administration has left office.

In the course of their everyday work presidents do not always live up to the standards they set for themselves and others in speeches and programs. In particular in the 2008 race, rhetoric was a key factor for success. Barack Obama's speeches were great motiva-

⁶ European Union policies on the other hand are of great importance in Austrian parliamentary election campaigns. Due to the supremacy of European Union law over conflicting law of member states and, consequently its direct effect on Austria, the European Union has far more influence than any country could have on other sovereign states such as the U.S.. Therefore, European Union policy in Austria and United States foreign policy cannot be compared to each other as topics in election campaigns.

tional sources for his supporters and sparked especially young first-time voters' interest in politics and the elections. The both contenders differed greatly in their style self-presentation. While John McCain used shorter and simpler sentences, the pronouns *I* and *they* and tried to convey the message of *experience* and *country first*, Barack Obamas complex and structured sentences allowed for more content in less time, he used the pronouns *we* and *you* and promised that *yes we can* bring about *change* (Bubenhof/Klimke/Scharloth 2008, 1-4).

John McCain's campaign manager Rick Davis even came to the conclusion that "[t]his election is not about issues [...] [t]his election is about a composite view of what people take away from these candidates" (Cillizza 2008). Although this statement overestimates rhetoric and underestimates substance and content, it underscores the importance of the *big picture* the electorate has of a candidate. Speeches, interviews, and soundbites are vital to painting this picture. However, while candidates might not always walk the talk (Schuh 2008, 99,113-114) the values and ideals they convey during the election race are essential for their success and set a litmus test for future evaluations of their work.

3.1. Presidential Primacy in Foreign Policy

As an onlooker to U.S. politics, especially as a non-American onlooker with little insight into U.S. domestic policies and political affairs, it seems obvious that the president clearly holds primacy over foreign policy. In reality, such an assessment is more intricate and cannot be made without a more detailed analysis. Supremacy over U.S. foreign policy has changed throughout American history. The intentions of the founding fathers⁷ and developments particularly in the twentieth century are at odds with each other in certain aspects.

Many considerations regarding the originally intentioned roles of the President and Congress in the field of foreign policy were based on the modality in which they are elected.

⁷ Those individuals who either signed the U.S. Declaration of Independence or participated in the Federal Convention where the U.S. Constitution was framed and adopted (or did both) are referred to in the U.S. political discourse as the founding fathers of the United States. They laid the foundation of the new nation by determining its most central values and beliefs in the Constitution.

As the president was the only official elected by *all* American people⁸, he was considered the only true voice of the nation (Mewes 1990, 42). “[...] [T]he President and senators so chosen will always be of the number of those who best understand our national interests, whether considered in relation to the several States or to foreign nations, who are best able to promote those interests, and whose reputation for integrity inspires and merits confidence.” (The Federalist No. 64 (John Jay), 2). Therefore, his leadership of the executive branch was originally reduced to almost no other function but foreign policy. His first and foremost role and obligation was to act as Commander in Chief (U.S. Constitution, art. II, § 2). Congress on the other hand, had the obligation to care for the wellbeing and defense of the state. Still today its influence on foreign policy is derived from its constitutionally granted powers to declare war and to regulate commerce with foreign nations pursuant to Article I, Section 8 U.S. Constitution.

Throughout history, there has been a gradual shift from the founding fathers’ originally declared intent to *limit* the president’s role to act as Commander in Chief once Congress had declared war. First, interpretation of the Constitution and additional explaining documents such as Hamilton’s and Madison’s Federalist Papers, has always been a hot topic prone to controversy. There is no absolute knowledge about the true intentions of the Constitution’s draftsmen. Second, the president always had the prerogative over Congress in case of a national emergency (Mewes 1990, 192). Presidents at all times have used this as a means of enlarging their own powers. Particularly during the Cold War a pronounced deviation from traditional foreign policy was evident. The shift to a *national security policy* became manifest in the National Security Act of 1947. This constituted the continuation and consolidation of presidential primacy in foreign policy (ibid., 195). The declining influence of the State Department and other cabinet departments further cemented the so-called *imperial presidency* (Schlesinger 1973). President Truman never sought a resolution from Congress to start war with Korea. As a matter of fact, an official declaration of war was never issued, neither for U.S. *actions* in Korea nor in Vietnam or any other mili-

⁸ *All* American people at the time of the passing of the Constitution were male, white and in possession of property. Over the course of time voting rights were expanded to non-white men (1870, Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution), women (1920, Nineteenth Amendment), and /inter alia /*Native Americans* (*Indian Citizenship Act of 1924*) and/ racial/ minorities (Voting Rights Act of 1965). Clauses requiring possession of property or introducing tax requirements were also banned.

3. Foreign Policy and the Presidency

tary engagement since World War II. Subsequently, President Nixon further centralized the foreign policy decision making process (Mewes 1990, 196-197). Congress aimed to regain some of its power and limit those of the president by passing the War Powers Act of 1973 (33 U.S.C. 1541-1548). It grants the president the right to deploy troops in the case of a national emergency without a prior declaration of war but necessitates a written notification to Congress within 48 hours of deployment. Without congressional consent to these actions troops have to be withdrawn within 60 days (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 720). Despite good intentions the passing of this Act has arguably further relegated congressional power in the foreign policy decision making process, curtailing the congressional right to declare war (Mewes 1990, 198) and thereby strengthening the Executive.

Apart from legal and factual powers that (may) reside with the president, his or her importance for foreign policy rests also on the fact that Congress is institutionally incapable of conducting continuous, coherent foreign policy. Both chambers are fragmented along partisan lines. Representatives of the House are only elected for two year terms making long-term foreign policy objectives hard to follow. Personal and party-related interests of the 20 plus committees dealing with foreign policy and their leaders further complicate matters (ibid., 253).

Apart from the Commander in Chief Clause, the power of making treaties is another important cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.

“The qualities elsewhere detailed as indispensable in the management of foreign negotiations, point out the Executive as the most fit agent in those transactions; while the vast importance of the trust, and the operation of treaties as laws, plead strongly for the participation of the whole or a portion of the legislative body in the office of making them” (The Federalist No. 75 (Alexander Hamilton), 2).

While the president has the power to make treaties, they have to be ratified by a 2/3 majority of the Senate to come into effect (Mewes 1990, 41). This provision should limit presidential power and is but one of the many *checks and balances* the founding fathers deemed necessary to prevent the U.S. from becoming a tyranny under any of the three branches of government. The legislative (Congress), executive (President), and judicial (Supreme Court and inferior courts) branch all have their own powers reviewed and counterbalanced by those of the other two. However, circumvention of these safeguards is not

impossible, as is the case with treaties. Presidents can sign executive agreements with other nations requiring neither advice from nor consent of the Senate. Since the early nineteenth hundreds executive agreements have almost continuously outnumbered treaties. During his tenure, President Clinton signed over 2,000 executive agreements. This amounted to nearly ten times the number of treaties executed by him. Although President George W. Bush signed significantly fewer executive agreements than his predecessor – *only* 612 in his first five years in office – these constituted already over 13 times the number of treaties he had brought before the Senate (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 287-288). Even though they are not binding for future administrations, the next president of the United States will certainly continue the tradition of signing executive agreements in order to strengthen his own stance on foreign policy *vis-à-vis* Congress.

One last power that needs to be discussed is the presidential veto which was proven to be a measure of major influence in the foreign policy decision making process. The President of the U.S. holds the power to veto any piece of legislation brought before him by Congress. Presidents have made substantial use of this discretionary right directly preventing thousands of bills to be enacted. This extensive influence has also led lawmakers to mostly pass bills they know will not be vetoed. Although Congress has the power to overthrow a presidential veto with a 2/3 majority vote in both houses, this has happened to only four percent of the over 2,500 presidential vetoes in U.S. history (ibid., 288-289).

Particularly the question of the extent of war powers vested in the president provokes highly controversial responses. In addition to a philosophic and academic debate, an assessment of *Realpolitik* proves the perception of absolute presidential powers in the foreign policy decision making process. President George W. Bush was almost granted *carte blanche* by Congress for the Iraq War. However, President Clinton's self perception that it was his "[...] constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations [...]" (Cairo 2008, 413) marks the case in particular.

In conclusion, "[t]he executive branch is the locus for creating and implementing U.S. foreign [...] policy; within the executive branch, the president is the most important individual" (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 714). Henceforth, this paper puts its analytic focus on the

presidential nominees, one of which will determine U.S. foreign policy for at least four years.

3.2. The Vice President – The Most Insignificant Office⁹?

As argued above primacy in foreign policy is largely vested with the president. Nonetheless, one cannot overlook a president's running mate as his or her potential substitute: the Vice President¹⁰. Apart from the presidential office, the vice president is the only other nationally elected official in the U.S. (Baumgartner 2006, 2).

Constitutionally, the Vice President has two main chores: He acts as presiding officer of the U.S. Senate and as such serves as tie-breaker in case the even number of Senators arrives at a 50:50 decision. Besides this, his only other official duty is to chair the U.S. Electoral College during its vote count. Unofficially these duties can be enlarged significantly based on the trust and intensity of the relationship to the president. Nonetheless, the role of Vice President is generally seen as a representative one and as having only minor influence (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 282).

The relevance of the Vice President's office goes beyond its mere legal status. In particular, two cases have to be made concerning its impact on foreign and hence development politics.

First, one man drastically changed the public's perception of the vice-presidency: Dick Cheney. His influence, not only on President George W. Bush but also on the decision making process in general and on policies and politics in particular, constituted a novelty in the United States (Freund 2008, 121) (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 299).

⁹ John Adams, America's first vice president described his office as "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived" (Baumgartner 2006, 1).

¹⁰ To date, no woman has held this position and until Sarah Palin only one other female candidate was ever chosen as a running mate for one of the two major parties: Geraldine Ferraro received this honor in 1984 under the unsuccessful Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 475).

Secondly, one needs to look at the historically important role of this office. Originally, the post of Vice President was offered to the succumbing presidential candidate as another means of checks and balances and a way of incorporating opposing parties into the newly created political system. Being Vice President should offer a means of participation and reinforce the belief in and the support for an evolving young nation. Because the Electoral College voted independently the vice president was not necessarily the person who had come second in the general election. Overall, the whole procedure was prone to interference. Therefore, in 1803 this *modus operandi* was changed by the U.S. Constitution's Twelfth Amendment requiring presidential candidates to choose their own running mates¹¹. Historically, this also altered the role of the Vice President without strengthening his position. On the contrary, it actually reduced his persona to the intended level of being a substitute in the case of a president's untimely death while serving a term, his removal from office or his resignation (U.S. Constitution, amend. XII) (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 284).

At first glance, being the first person in the presidential line of succession does not appear to be a successful route to office. In reality, it has often proven to be. Out of the 47 Vice Presidents to date 14 became President themselves, out of which nine actually succeeded to the presidency during a term rather than being publicly elected. Eight of these successions occurred due to the death of the president in office. In the 20th century alone, the vice president had to step up five times with Lyndon B. Johnson (succeeding John F. Kennedy after his assassination) and Gerald Ford (following Richard Nixon's resignation over the Watergate scandal) being the most recent and arguably also the most prominent presidential successors (O'Connor, et al. 2008, 284) (Baumgartner 2006, 2-3).

The question of succession was especially important in the election of the 44th President. While Barack Obama was a very healthy 47-year old at the time of election, his contender John McCain was not only 25 years his senior but had also suffered from several severe medical conditions. Therefore, many observers feared that a President John McCain was likely to de cease during his tenure due to the harsh physical toll the office takes on the incumbent. Although John McCain also has a reputation for defying the odds¹², it was

¹¹ The choice of running mate is made by the presidential nominee and ratified by the parties' conventions (Hershey 2007, 187). See also chapter 2.

¹² John McCain survived severe torture as a young soldier in Vietnam as well as melanoma, leaving him with certain physical restraints and impediments. John McCain's personal account of these incidents can be

necessary to present a healthy, fit and young running mate. Consequently, Sarah Palin was subject to higher scrutiny than Joe Biden because of the imminent possibility of her having to take over office.

The vice presidency is not the most insignificant office but might rather be described with the words of Franklin Roosevelt's first vice president John Nance Garner as "the spare tire on the automobile of government" (Baumgartner 2006, 3). While, Sarah Palin could have easily become the 45th President of the United States before 2012, Joe Biden on the other hand was likely to actively seek and gain influence on a future President Barack Obama as to U.S. foreign affairs due to his foreign policy expertise. Henceforth, it is necessary to also analyze the Vice Presidential candidates' standpoints on foreign policy.

3.3. Relevant Schools of Thought

In the context of U.S. politics in general and foreign policy in particular, strict identification with a particular political ideology is less a driving force than the adherence to schools of thought. Especially in an academic discourse their analysis is highly relevant for the assessment of foreign policy. Development policy is mostly regarded and used as a subsystem of foreign policy. "International Development" is an interdisciplinary field not only in social science and humanities but also in a political context. Development agendas are located at the intersection of foreign policy, national and international security, the economy, ecology, health and education, and various other fields of policy interests (Nuscheler 1996, 358-371). In the United States government development policies are allocated to a subdivision of the Department of State – the Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance, which is charged "[...] with ensuring that foreign assistance is used as effectively as possible to meet broad foreign policy objectives" (U.S. Department of State 2009).

Due to this interwoven nature of foreign and development policy as well as a lack of pronounced development strategies of both presidential candidates reviewed their stance on several developing countries will be analyzed in the context of their general political lean-

found in his book "Faith of my Fathers" (McCain 2008). See also chapter 4 discussing John McCain in detail.

ing. This chapter will therefore provide the basis by briefly introducing the relevant schools of thought.

3.3.1. Realism and Neorealism

In U.S. foreign policy realism is very often congruent with the conservative *camp*. “Seeing the world as it is, not as it might or should be” (Rathbun 2008, 284) marks the clear line of distinction from idealism. At the same time such a realistic approach to foreign policy leads to a lack of visions. They are not necessary in a perceived surrounding of constants with little change – surroundings in which every other country is regarded as a potential threat (Gärtner 2008, 53). Therefore, realism emphasizes national sovereignty without focusing on morality. However, this does not mean that realists propagate immoral standards but rather that morality is not invoked in the decision making process. In essence, realism can be described as amoral without humanitarian predispositions. In addition, there is no partiality for either the use of force or diplomacy. Both methods are part of a realist toolkit and their application is based on the case at hand. George H. W. Bush's presidency is often cited as a particularly illustrative case of realist foreign policy (Rathbun 2008, 278-280). In his management of the First Gulf War or the end of the Cold War, “[...] he made decisions based on larger considerations of national interest within a broader strategic calculus that tied ends to means” (Naftali 2008).

In political theory realism is not a monolithic school of thought. Instead it can be subdivided into various specific directions, with the most prominent and also for this thesis most important being neorealism.

Neorealism deviates from classical realism in certain aspects, the most important of which lies in its views on the nature and driving force of international politics. In the words of its most prominent representative and arguably *creator*, neorealism perceives international politics “[...] as a system with a precisely defined structure [...]” (Waltz 1990, 30) and in comparison to realism it furthermore “[...] produces as shift in causal relations, offers a different interpretation of power, and treats the unit level differently” (ibid. , 32). For neorealists the world cannot be understood at the level of single units – nation states – alone but needs to take the structure-level into account as well (ibid., 34). The root of conflict lies, for realism, within a power-seeking human nature, for neo-

realism it is based on a state of anarchy in which power is a defining element of structure (ibid., 36).

In short, realism and neorealism both stem from the same analytic background and are situated within the same school of thought. In a theoretic analysis a clear distinction has to be drawn, however, applied to practical politics the contrast might blur.

3.3.2. Idealism

The dispute between idealism and realism was the first schism in the theory of international relations. Both schools of thought are antagonistic by nature. Idealism aims for nations to coexist in a state of peace. Therefore, nations are perceived as being part of a worldwide community in contrast to the realist notion of constant competition between egoistic individual states. Within this community self-interests of nations are interwoven and interconnected. International institutions and international law serve as binding agents and mechanisms of regulation. However, by pursuing their own reasonable and justified interests, nations at the same time further the international community of states and its peaceful continuance (Gu 2000, 19-21).

In U.S. foreign policy idealism is closely associated with Wilsonianism. Based on President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, this particular form of idealism emphasizes a world system based on public international law, multilateralism, liberalized international trade, the spread of social and democratic American values, and an amalgam of collective security and self-determination (Gärtner 2008, 64).

Both liberalism and its derivatives as well as neoconservatism descend from idealism and build on certain of its elements. Yet, in particular neoconservatism only incorporates those aspects of idealism which do not limit national sovereignty and the possibilities of a state to act at its own discretion, thereby completely delegitimizing multilateralism as a means of foreign policy.

3.3.3. Neoconservatism

While realism and therefore conservatism is lacking visions, neoconservatism has plenty of them to offer. First and foremost neoconservatism calls for "national greatness" (ibid.,

284). The conviction that the United States is bound to predominance in a global hierarchy is based on the belief in this greatness of the American nation. “The neoconservative view shifts the emphasis from defense and stability to identity and democracy” (Nau 2008, 66). Supplemented by a Manichean worldview which divides the world into good and evil neoconservatism takes a constructivist approach (Rathbun 2008, 286). The belief in a unique American mission, in which the U.S. “[...] as God’s ‘chosen nation’ [...]” (Judis 2005, 1-2) fights the forces of evil, is based on Protestant millennialism¹³ – a perception of the world brought to the U.S. by the first pilgrims which endured centuries and resulted in American nationalism and exceptionalism (ibid., 2-3). Relying on American ideals, the goal is to remake the world in America’s image – a world that surrounds the United States with hostile enemies. This teleological perspective relies heavily on military power as a means of both deterrence and protection (Rathbun 2008, 287). Furthermore, the notion of regime change is paramount. The belief that “[...] altering the composition of foreign regimes alters their foreign-policy behavior” (Nau 2008, 66) together with the conviction that “[...] democracies are less prone to fight or challenge other democracies [...]” (ibid.) leads to the policy of promoting American-style democracy vigorously. Therefore, Charles Krauthammer proposes the term *democratic globalism* instead of neoconservatism to describe this “[...] improvement on realism [...] [which] understands the utility of democracy as a means for achieving global safety and security” (Krauthammer 2004, 16).

Such strong emphasis of American interests and values rests not solely upon the high regard neoconservatives have for their country’s past. Neoconservatism is not *mere* patriotism. Neoconservatism is based on hopes of future greatness and a belief in U.S. national superiority and American exceptionalism. Therefore, this school of thought can be identified as nationalism (Rathbun 2008, 285), which *per definitionem* is also unilateralist. Neoconservatism disdains multilateralism and prefers sovereign, autonomous action even if cooperation was the easier choice (Gärtner 2008, 66).

¹³ Protestant millennialism describes the belief of English Puritans that Armageddon – the final battle between the forces of good and evil – would take place in New England which they see as the *new Israel*. It was later transformed into “[...] America’s ‘civil millennialism’ [...], into the language of American nationalism and exceptionalism” (Judis 2005, 2-3). This evolution can be traced to the neoconservative mission to spread freedom and defeat international terrorism and radical Islam through “unilateral action with ad hoc alliances” (ibid., 3).

Both conservatism and neoconservatism agree upon the notion that U.S. foreign policy must primarily serve U.S. strategic interests. They differ in their choice of means, particularly in the willingness to use force, but also in their goals. While conservatives are content with preserving U.S. security, neoconservatives aim to reshape the world in America's image. They are driven by certain ideals, which they deem universal. However, neoconservatives are neither idealists nor realists (Rathbun 2008, 274).

3.3.4. Liberal Internationalism and Liberal Institutionalism

The liberal-internationalist view [...] gives priority to national identity but considers America to be a 'universalist' rather than exceptionalist country. America is only one of many countries advancing human rights, pluralism, secularism and modernization. Other nations contribute, too. Thus, liberal internationalists favor giving all countries equal voice in world affairs, whether they are democracies or not, and working with them through multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, not through the balance of power. (Nau 2008, 66-67).

Liberal internationalism, "[...] the dominant school of American liberalism [...]" (Krauthammer 2004, 15-16), is often interlinked with liberal institutionalism. The latter however, can by no means be reduced to the former. Liberal institutionalism is based on the assumption that peaceful relations between nations can be reached through international institutions which build shared values and norms. This anti-realist school of thought believes that international institutions rather than the individual pursuit of national interests are best suited to create and maintain international security (Gärtner 2008, 61).

This legalism is one of the main pillars of liberal internationalism, and strives for "[...] the construction of a web of treaties and agreements that will bind the international community in a normative web" (Krauthammer 2004, 16). Neither internationalism nor institutionalism take into consideration the internal systems of nations involved in multilateral institutions because they see no causality between internally democratic or despotic regimes and their conduct of foreign policy. This clearly distinguishes them from neoconservatism which strives for democratization (Gu 2000, 64). Apart from this focus on multilateralism and a strong rejection of unilateralism, liberal internationalism believes in "[...] humanitarianism, a deep suspicion of national interest as a justification for projecting power [...]" (Krauthammer 2004, 16).

4. The Republican Ticket – More of the Same?

The slogan *More of the Same* was both a wish chanted by his supporters at campaign events and a warning voiced by John McCain's opponents, expressing the hope and fear that the Arizona Senator would continue down the path President George W. Bush had set out.

4.1. John McCain – The Republican Maverick

Stemming from a military family, John McCain's personal path for life was laid out very early. In his autobiography *Faith of my Fathers* (McCain/Salter 2008a) the Arizona Senator, who was born in 1936, describes his upbringing and his personal experiences as a naval aviator in the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. Being shot down, wounded and subsequently imprisoned in 1967 had a dramatic and lasting impact on his life leaving him permanently incapable of lifting his arms above his head. Having himself fallen victim to torture as a prisoner of war (POW), John McCain firmly opposes this interrogation technique. He bases his criticism on three pillars. First, the use of torture constitutes a violation of the Geneva Convention. Second, it is an ineffective technique which doesn't yield the results desired (McCain 2005b, 156-157). On the contrary, instead of offering reliable intelligence, tortured detainees will tell only what they believe their violators want to hear. In his autobiography he makes the same observation, admitting to have broken under torture at *Hanoi Hilton*. However, he did not relinquish any relevant information (McCain 2008a). Third, the use of torture is immoral and deemed unworthy of American foundational values by McCain (McCain 2005b, 157). The Senator is so steadfast in his belief in an America living up to its own standards that he strictly dismissed a question on U.S. use of torture: "*Does America treat people inhumanely?* My answer is no, and from all I have seen, America's answer has always been no" (McCain 2006, 22).

After his return from Vietnam, he spent several more years in the military before divorcing, marrying his second wife and subsequently becoming a U.S. congressman in 1982. In 1986 he succeeded Barry Goldwater as Senator from Arizona and has been a member of the Senate ever since (Nowicki/Muller 2007a). John McCain soon earned a reputation for

4. The Republican Ticket

being a *maverick*¹⁴. He repeatedly deviated from the Republican Party's preset line, following his own beliefs (Nowicki/Muller 2007b). Being a *maverick* soon became John McCain's trademark and was used incessantly in his 2008 presidential campaign to assert that not only the Democratic presidential nominee would bring *change* to Washington.

In 2000, John McCain made his first attempt to become president but withdrew his candidacy after several primary losses and a negative advertisement battle with George W. Bush who subsequently secured the Republican nomination and was elected President. Although John McCain supported his former contender in the Republican presidential campaign against John Kerry, the Arizona Senator remained critical of the Bush administration.

John McCain has written several books together with Mark Salter, depicting not only his family memoirs but, for example, also the Republican Candidate's leadership role models, setting the tone of a potential President McCain when it comes to answering "hard calls" (McCain/Salter 2008b).

4.2. An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom

John McCain's Foreign Affairs essay¹⁵ *An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom* laid out his agenda in this field of a president's work. As the article's subtitle suggested, the Republican candidate's focus lay on "securing America's future" (McCain 2007b). To achieve this goal, it will be the duty of the next president "to build an enduring global peace on the foundations of freedom, security, opportunity, prosperity, and hope. America needs a president who can revitalize our country's purpose and standing in the world, defeat terrorist adversaries who threaten liberty at home and abroad, and build enduring peace" (ibid., 19).

¹⁴ The term "maverick" originally refers to unbranded and, therefore, presumably unclaimed cattle. Metaphorically maverick is used to describe an independent thinker, someone non-conformist, a rebel.

¹⁵ The renowned journal Foreign Affairs customarily invites promising U.S. presidential candidates of either party in the run-up to the elections to write an essay outlining their proposed foreign policy agenda. The 2008 campaign essays can be found at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/special/campaign2008>.

Besides strengthened homeland security, a restructured military and a clear focus on anti-terrorism efforts, John McCain describes an additional tool for achieving these tasks. He proposes

[...] linking democratic nations in one common organization: a worldwide League of Democracies. This would be unlike Woodrow Wilson's doomed plan for the universal-membership League of Nations. Instead, it would be similar to what Theodore Roosevelt envisioned: like-minded nations working together for peace and liberty. The organization could act when the UN fails – to relieve human suffering in places such as Darfur, combat HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, fashion better policies to confront environmental crises, provide unimpeded market access to those who endorse economic and political freedom, and take other measures unattainable by existing regional or universal-membership systems. This League of Democracies would not supplant the UN or other international organizations but complement them by harnessing the political and moral advantages offered by united democratic action. By taking steps such as bringing concerted pressure to bear on tyrants in Burma (renamed Myanmar by its military government in 1989) or Zimbabwe, uniting to impose sanctions on Iran, and providing support to struggling democracies in Serbia and Ukraine, the League of Democracies would serve as a unique handmaiden of freedom. If I am elected president, during my first year in office I will call a summit of the world's democracies to seek the views of my counterparts and explore the steps necessary to realize this vision -- just as America led in creating NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] six decades ago. (McCain 2007b, 27)

This concept was neither new and nor masterminded by John McCain himself. Robert Kagan, a senior associate with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and notably one of the most prominent spearheads of American neoconservatism, has to be credited with drawing the blueprint for this envisioned *League of Democracies*. Although the McCain camp never officially released a list of advisers for the presidential nominee, Robert Kagan was one of those closest to the Republican contender throughout the race (Bumiller/Rohter 2008).

In his book “The Return of History and the End of Dreams”, published in 2008, Robert Kagan depicts his concept of the exclusive “axis of democracies” in opposition to “the association of autocrats” (Kagan 2008, 53). In his opinion, in the 1990s the world relapsed in its way towards universal Enlightenment after getting a head start in 1989. Its “mistake [...] was the hope that democracy was inevitable” (ibid., 99). Hence, history is returning rather than having ended as Francis Fukuyama, another renowned neoconservative scholar, predicted (ibid., 5). Autocracies such as primarily Russia and China only suffered a temporary setback in their strive for greatness. Today these two countries are opposing *the West* (led by the United States). They are “serious ideological competitors [...] to liberal democracy” (Fukuyama in ibid.). Instead they seek influence in the same countries as *the West* does. Kagan sketches a new bipolarity between these global actors with the rest of the world – especially India, Japan and Iran – being torn between them. Much

of this rhetoric (re-)appears in John McCain's speeches. While John McCain in contrast to Robert Kagan clearly perceives Iran as one of the main adversaries to U.S. interests, he closely echoes the Manichean view of a world torn between good and evil.

Kagan denies the possibility of a „genuine strategic cooperation between the United States and Russia“ (ibid., 85) or China. Although referring solely to the war on terror in this context, his general proposition is very much the same. China and Russia are the leading proponents of an autocratic alliance of adversaries to the United States in its propagation of democracy in the entire world. John McCain, who sees “three letters: a K, a G and a B” (CFR 2007g) in Russian President Vladimir Putin's eyes, takes the same stance: “[...] it's [...] a requirement to not allow Chavez in Venezuela, Putin in Russia and the president of Iran to dictate world events, bully their neighbors and use oil as a weapon which would probably further terrorism and endanger this nation's national security” (Wall Street Journal 2007). Both Robert Kagan and John McCain believe that Russia and China will not change their concept of power and their desire “to maintain predominant influence in the regions that matter to them, and to exclude the influence of other great powers” (Kagan 2008, 19) – a concept very similar to what they envision for U.S. foreign policy.

Dichotomizing the world allows John McCain to extend President George W. Bush's *axis of evil* to encompass autocracies in general. The neoconservative imperative to spread American values and American-style democracy to maintain and broaden U.S. influence and preserve the national interest does not allow for a multilateral organization such as the UN to undercut U.S. autonomy. An institutionalized, American-led “concert of democracies” (ibid., 97) on the other hand, will serve the strategic purpose of making the U.S. safer without the UN's restrictions and help continue President George W. Bush's unilaterally conducted strategy of democratization (Gärtner 2008, 70). It would offer *multilateralism* for an elect few. Despite McCain's stated promise that such an organization would only supplement the United Nations in the long run it might very well replace it.

The foundation for John McCain's League of Democracies will be a system of free trade:

Americans can be confident that a world of economic and political freedom will sustain our global leadership by promoting our values and enhancing our prosperity. To unite us with friends and allies in a common prosperity, as president I will aggressively promote

global trade liberalization at the World Trade Organization and expand America's free-trade agreements to friendly nations on every continent. (McCain 2007b, 27)

Free trade is the Arizona governor's universal answer and antidote for underdevelopment, Anti-American sentiments and particularly violent Islamism: We "[...] will help friendly Muslim states establish the building blocks of open and tolerant societies. And we will nurture a culture of hope and economic opportunity by establishing a free-trade area from Morocco to Afghanistan, open to all who do not sponsor terrorism" (ibid., 21).

John McCain's country- and topic-specific foreign policy concepts will be discussed in those chapters analyzing the appropriate case studies.

4.3. Sarah Palin – Governor, Hockey Mum and Proud Passport-Holder

The fairly unknown Governor of Alaska was a surprise nomination for the political community, media and presumably even the majority of the Republican Party. Sarah Palin, 45, started her political career as city council member and subsequently mayor of Wasilla, a small town in Alaska. She became Governor of Alaska in 2006. During her tenure, her policy focus lay mainly on energy issues.

Traditionalist and "[b]ible believing Christian" (Newton-Small 2008) Sarah Palin, a mother of five, described herself as a "hockey mum" and had great appeal to social conservative Republicans (Cooper/Bumiller 2008, 1). Nonetheless, many observers came to the conclusion that John McCain's choice of running mate might have done more harm than good to his campaign. Her inexperience alienated many more moderate Republicans as well as independents than she could gain on the right with her pronounced religious zealotry and highly conservative values (Cohen/Agiesta 2008). By nominating Palin, McCain also undermined the campaign's major line of attack on Barack Obama. With someone as young and with an as limited political track record as Sarah Palin had, Obama's alleged inexperience was difficult to savage any further (Cooper/Bumiller 2008, 1). Even steadfast Republicans such as Colin Powell, who endorsed Barack Obama for president shortly before the election, expressed their concern over the nomination of Sarah Palin: "[...] She's a very distinguished woman and she's to be admired, but at the same time now that we have had a chance to watch her for some seven weeks, I don't believe she's

ready to be President of the United States, which is the job of the Vice President.” (MSNBC 2008c, 1). In general, it appeared to be mainly her track record or, to put it more bluntly, the obvious lack of a record on foreign policy that daunted support for her candidacy (ibid., 5). The possession of a passport does certainly not serve as a sound proof of foreign policy expertise and nearly three quarters of the U.S. population do not own one. Nevertheless, Palin’s confession that she received her first passport only in 2006 to visit U.S. troops in Kuwait caused some bewilderment and fueled further criticism (Couric 2008). So did many of her remarks in her first official interview as vice presidential nominee conducted by Charlie Gibson of ABC News. Governor Palin demonstrated a certain ignorance of foreign policy issues, for example by obviously not knowing what the so-called *Bush Doctrine*¹⁶ was (ABC News 2008).

Exit polls proved that Sarah Palin was more a liability than an asset to the McCain campaign, because “[s]ixty percent of those polled said the Alaska governor is not qualified to be president if necessary” (CNN 2008c).

The general view of Sarah Palin’s foreign policy expertise throughout the election campaign was highly unfavorable. The Council on Foreign Relations stated: “She has yet to detail her positions on many major foreign policy issues.” (CFR 2008e). This paper comes to the same conclusion.

¹⁶ The four pillars of the Bush doctrine are most clearly compiled in “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America” of September 2002 and can be summarized as follows: 1. America must maintain its global primacy, and it can and must lead; 2. It may use preventive force; 3. It might have to rely on coalitions of the willing or resort to unilateral action; 4. The promotion of democracy is a key to securing long-term peace and stability (The White House 2002).

5. The Democratic Ticket – Change We Can Believe In?

The slogan *Change we can believe in* was one, if not *the*, trademark of the Obama campaign. It signaled his promise to bring about change in Washington on many levels, particularly a change of direction from President George W. Bush's politics.

5.1. Barack Obama – The Democratic Superstar

Barack Obama, married father of two, was born in Hawaii in 1961 to an American mother and a Kenyan father. His mixed heritage made him an unlikely candidate for the presidency of a country in which his parents' union was still illegal in some states in the late 1960's. Growing up partially in Indonesia further fostered his interest in foreign affairs. Drawing on his *multiracial* background and international upbringing, he believes that he is "[...] well situated to help the country understand how we can both celebrate our diversity and all its complexity and still affirm our common bonds. Maybe I can help with that because I've got so many different pieces in me" (Oprah Magazine Editors 2005, 293). Furthermore, he often discussed his self-identification as an African-American and his roots in that community, stressing the point that nevertheless he was not limited to this aspect of his heritage (Leibovich 2004, C01). During his first visit to his paternal homeland he felt uneasy like "[...] a Westerner not entirely at home in the West, an African on his way to a land full of strangers [...]" (Obama 2004b).

Before attending law school, Obama moved to Chicago and spent several years as a community organizer in underprivileged neighborhoods – an experience which greatly inspired him (ibid., 127). As the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review, one of the most prestigious positions available to law students in the U.S., Obama already made history early in his career (Anonymous a 2004, 16). After graduating *magna cum laude* from Harvard in 1991, he worked as a lawyer and as a law professor at the University of Chicago (Obama 2004b) before successfully running for the Illinois State Senate in 1996. His keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention – where John Kerry was nominated to run against incumbent President Bush – strongly raised his public profile and made him an overnight star for Democrats. Furthermore, it paved his way to become the fifth *black* person to ever serve as U.S. Senator. At a time

when George W. Bush's policies, especially the war in Iraq, created a deep rift in the American society threatening to split the U.S., Barack Obama promised that he would not further divide the country along partisan lines but reach across the aisles instead:

There is not a liberal America and a conservative America--there is the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America: there's the United States of America. The pundits like to slice-and-dice our country into Red States for Republicans, Blue States for Democrats. But I've got news for them. We worship an awesome God in the Blue States, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the Red States. We coach Little League in the Blue States and have gay friends in the Red States. There are patriots who oppose the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it. [...] We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America. (Obama 2004a)

His first book, a very personal autobiography, published in 1995 at the age of 34 earned him a Grammy for his own reading of the audiobook version (Lowy 2006). In his second book, the presidential hopeful laid out his "thoughts on reclaiming the American dream" (Obama 2006c). His prescription for a change of politics and a better future for the U.S. centered around the belief, that "[w]hat's needed is a broad majority of Americans – Democrats, Republicans, and independents of goodwill – who are reengaged in the project of national renewal, and who see their own self-interest as inextricably linked to the interests of others" (ibid., 40). This notion was an important theme for his whole presidential campaign, trying to rally support from both sides of the American political spectrum by transcending categories and promising reconciliation (Will 2007). This was also an essential part of Obama's foreign policy proposals, taking into account the interconnectedness of different countries' self-interests.

5.2. Renewing American Leadership

In his Foreign Affairs essay, Barack Obama proclaimed that "[t]he mission of the United States is to provide global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity" (Obama 2007a, 4). His underlying presumption is that, due to U.S. shortcomings such as the war in Iraq and the torture scandal in Abu Ghraib, "[...] the world has lost trust in our purposes and our principles" (ibid., 3). However, "America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, and the world cannot meet them without America. We can neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission. We must lead the world, by deed and by example" (ibid.). Although Barack

Obama “[...] denounce[s] American unilateralism and military aggression [...]” (Nau 2008, 67), he does not intend to surrender U.S. leadership in the world. On the contrary, the Democratic nominee clearly depicts his vision on *renewing American leadership*: “Our global engagement cannot be defined by what we are against; it must be guided by a clear sense of what we stand for” (Obama 2007a, 13).

In his nomination acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention he outlined his agenda in more detail:

I will end this war in Iraq responsibly, and finish the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. I will rebuild our military to meet future conflicts. But I will also renew the tough, direct diplomacy that can prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and curb Russian aggression. I will build new partnerships to defeat the threats of the 21st century: terrorism and nuclear proliferation; poverty and genocide; climate change and disease. And I will restore our moral standing, so that America is once again that last, best hope for all who are called to the cause of freedom, who long for lives of peace, and who yearn for a better future. (Obama 2008b)

Barack Obama transcends categories. His foreign policy approach combines selected elements of several traditional schools of thought. He is neither a pure realist nor a pure idealist. He believes that the U.S. should play a lead role in world politics without being neoconservative. He talks about democracy but does not want to export it by force. Despite voting for a raise in military expenditure he is not a realist (Gärtner 2008, 167). The most important elements are Obama’s realist accentuation of American strength, his aforementioned goal to restore America’s reputation, and his emphasis of engagement, partnership and diplomacy as components of a liberal internationalist foreign policy (ibid., 170). His ideological patchwork can be subsumed as pragmatism. This “[...] doesn’t mean his world view isn’t philosophically grounded; it’s simply driven by necessity” (Hirsh 2008).

Barack Obama’s country- and topic-specific foreign policy concepts will be discussed in those chapters analyzing the appropriate case studies.

5.3. Joe Biden – Senator, Old-School Politician and Foreign Policy Pundit

Joseph “Joe” Robinette Biden Jr., 65, served 35 years as U.S. Senator for Delaware. In 1972, the then-29-year-old ran for the Senate for the first time and won the election against the Republican incumbent. Only five weeks before being sworn in, Joe Biden turned 30, thereby fulfilling the statutory age restriction (Biden 2008d, 57). Over three decades later he has served as chairman of both the Foreign Relations and the Judiciary Committees for several terms each (ibid., xviii).

Joe Biden had previously run in the Democratic primaries in 1988 but had to withdraw his candidacy partly due to allegations of plagiarism. Eventually, he decided to give it another try in the 2008 presidential elections but withdrew from the Democratic primaries on January 3, 2008, when his campaign failed to generate the expected voters’ support in the Iowan caucus (CFR 2008d).

The Delaware Senator was both a very likely and at the same time highly unlikely person to be selected as Barack Obama’s running mate. Although he was present on every short list of possible candidates, his repeated suggestion during the primaries that Barack Obama was not yet fit for the presidency seemed to severely damage his chances. In a debate hosted by ABC Biden voiced his concern: “I think he [Obama] can be ready, but right now I don’t believe he is. The presidency is not something that lends itself to on-the-job training.” (ABC News 2007, 3). How could he serve under a president he did not deem ready for leading? Nonetheless, Biden offered the obvious advantage of balancing Obama’s perceived weaknesses. As a senator he has an impressive track and voting record which clearly demonstrates his stance on foreign policy. Especially his chairing of the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee offered him invaluable insight and left him with a largely undisputed reputation in that field. Joe Biden had had visited many major conflict zones in the world when he announced his decision to (once again) run for president in January 2007 and did not stop to do so later (CFR 2008d). Even during the presidential race he visited Georgia when tensions with Russia led to a short outbreak of war in August 2008 (Hechtkopf 2008).

Over the years, Senator Biden has gained a reputation of being an interventionist. He proposed intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo and argued along the same lines concerning Pakistan and Darfur. Initially he also supported U.S. engagement in Iraq. His advocacy of

this kind of foreign policy is born out of a desire to spread the ideals “[...] of democracy and human rights, a well-intentioned, but highly risky stance that has won him devoted support as well as widespread opposition” (Ridgeway 2007, 277).

6. Regional Focus Middle East

The so-called Third World is spread out over several continents, encompassing dozens of countries. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the presidential nominees' ideas and prescriptions on development policies, it is methodically useful to focus this analysis on one region instead of drawing examples from all over the world. A regional approach allows for a more comprehensive examination particularly since it provides the opportunity to highlight interrelations and cross-border issues between the selected countries. Consequently, it secures a coherence of topics.

There is no denying of the special importance of the Middle East in today's world. This conflict-ridden area's development has implications reaching far beyond its borders. The countries discussed don't all classify as typical developing countries and therefore, Western approaches cannot always be categorized as standard development politics. In this region however, foreign policy is very often congruent with development policy and *vice versa*. U.S. foreign policy in general is often hard to distinguish from its developmental approaches as the latter is more often than not seen as a tool of the former.

U.S. relations with the Middle East can be characterized as being just as troubled as the region itself. Perceived as having only been established a few decades ago, the argument can be made that U.S. engagement in the Middle East is almost as old as the United States encompassing a wide field of aspects ranging from culture to economy and most certainly to military (Oren 2007). Perceptions of this relation differ widely. On the one hand, harsh criticism of U.S. policies is voiced, on the other hand, vast generalizations of the Middle East and Islam create and fuel perceived dichotomies. Noam Chomsky and Bernard Lewis, as well as Samuel Huntington, are highly visible proponents of this antagonism. While the linguist and self-declared liberal socialist Chomsky illustrated his mother country as "the leading terrorist state" (Barsamian 2001, 16), Lewis believes in a Muslim rage that started with the crusades and led to an inevitable "clash of civilizations" (Lewis 2001-2002). Indeed, orientalist notions drawing images of *the* Middle East as a threat to the U.S. and the whole *Judeo-Christian*¹⁷ Western world were pervasive. "The clash of civi-

¹⁷ In the United States there is widespread belief that certain moral standards which are commonplace in the U.S. are derived from shared concepts which can be found in both Judaism and Christianity.

lizations foretold by Huntington¹⁸ could not have been more luridly illustrated than by the crash of hijacked planes. And yet Americans were generally loath to lump the peace-abiding Muslim majority together with the mass murderers of 9/11” (Oren 2007, 583).

In the wake of the September 11 attacks of 2001, public opinion changed and people rallied around their president. Seven years later, there has been another shift in the U.S. mind-set and a rift has split the American people in two. The Middle East has become and remained the central topic of a U.S. foreign policy committed to GWOT – the U.S. proclaimed “global war on terror”. Such a vague phrase did neither adequately define the group of people perceived as enemies¹⁹ nor set a geographic focal point. It left plenty of room to accommodate various actors and countries under this subheading. In addition, it created a “culture of fear” centered on color-coded threat levels and a growing Islamophobia (Brzezinski 2007, B01).

These policies had an impact on U.S. foreign affairs as a whole, when President George W. Bush, “[f]ollowing the examples of Truman, Eisenhower, and Carter, all of whom had adopted new approaches to security threats from the region [the Middle East], [...] devised a doctrine. [...] The tactic of preemption that Johnson and Nixon had opposed when wielded by Israel was now American policy” (Oren 2007, 585). The Bush doctrine further led to the renewal of American unilateralism (Brzezinski 2008, 185) and ultimately united enemies of the U.S. against the self-proclaimed superpower instead of dividing them (Slavin 2007, 39).

Many scholars and experts today identify the Middle East and Islamic hostility towards the West as the major geopolitical challenges for the United States in the 21st century. Think tanks, newspapers, TV-stations, universities and many others regularly publish on these topics. In a 2006 address at Georgetown University, Secretary of State Condoleezza

¹⁸ As cited above, the idea of a “clash of civilizations” was first articulated by Bernard Lewis and later written out in detail by his student Samuel P. Huntington (2003) in his seminal work “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”.

¹⁹ The definition of a terrorist is mostly in the eye of the beholder: one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. Definitions and classifications are manifold as is literature on this topic, especially since 9/11. They usually comprise terrorism as the use of violence to create fear, coerce governments, and intimidate societies as a common denominator. Most definitions don’t classify the perpetrators of these acts and remain rather fuzzy. For a more comprehensive overview see for example Heinz Gärtner’s definitions on international security (Gärtner 2005, 140-146).

Rice urged students to learn “difficult languages” such as Farsi, Urdu or Arabic to pursue careers in the U.S. diplomatic service (Rice 2006). Former and current political advisors like Zbigniew Brzezinski name especially Iran and Pakistan as the top-priorities for the next administration’s foreign and development policies (Brzezinski 2008, 181).

Middle Eastern nations’ affairs are intermingled and can hardly be addressed isolated from each other. The following chapter will consequently take a look at Iran and Pakistan, but also at the two military hot spots the U.S. is facing since 2001 and 2003 respectively: Afghanistan and Iraq. Since the alleged ouster of the Taliban from Afghanistan the country has received little attention, especially after the U.S. war against Saddam Hussein started.

In the course of this analysis, it will also be necessary to see beyond the typical critical incidents and address the Arab World in general as well. The promotion of democracy has been one of the major driving forces for George W. Bush’s neoconservative aspirations. What are the Republican and Democratic presidential nominees’ ideas and values and how do they want to spread them?

Oren comes to the – not un-contested - conclusion that “[o]n balance, Americans historically brought far more benefices than avarices to the Middle East and caused significantly less harm than good” (Oren 2007, 603). The question then is to which of these sides will the next president contribute more strongly? Will he be able to live up to that legacy? One prescription consists of American policymakers and an American public who not only “[...] press on with their civic mission as mediators and liberators in the area and strive for a *pax Americana* [...]” (ibid., 594) but who are also willing to question themselves as well as their motives and reconsider U.S. – Middle Eastern relations (ibid., 603). The possible approaches are manifold.

The following chapters will address John McCain’s and Barack Obama’s policies. How do they want to shape the Middle East and what means will they use to reach their ends?

6.1. Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the most important countries in the Middle East with respect to foreign policy and has regained its position as an important regional fac-

tor. Iran aspires to become a regional “superpower” as well as a global player²⁰ (Taheri 2006, 101). Positioning itself as *the* opponent, *the* opposition to the U.S. in the Middle East seems to be one of the most important assets of President Ahmadinejad to reach this goal (Ansari 2008, 53). Until now it appears to be a successful strategy. The only Shiite theocracy is perceived as a (potentially) serious threat to stability in the region.

Iran is not always categorized as a classical developing country. Some might agree with Parag Khanna (2008, 227-233) on its “Second World” status. While the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) ranks the country under “Medium Human Development”²¹ (UNDP 2008f), the IMF sees it as part of its group of “Emerging and Developing Economies” (IMF 2009). Iran is the beneficiary of several World Bank loans *inter alia* for health care and water supply (Khanna 2008, 228). Unemployment is soaring, particularly among young adults. The official numbers of 12.5% are being contested and believed to be as high as 17% (Worth 2009). With 18% of the population living below the poverty line - official estimates in 2006 and 2007, which are very likely significantly higher - (Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran 2008/2009) and a Gini coefficient of 43% (UNDP 2008a), Iran is situated within the ranks of other developing countries on the brink to betterment. But concerning social and political structure, repression of free speech, human rights violations, oppression of women, and many other accounts of governmental misconduct put Iran on a par with other despotic regimes in the developing world. Arguing along the lines of thinkers such as Amartya Sen²² (2000), development encompasses a far broader range of aspects than mere economic factors. While assistance in capacity building and the establishment of institutions dealing with for example human rights or gender equality might not necessarily count towards a Western country's ODA, it helps the advancement of freedom(s) and development. It is a fact that Iranian citizens

²⁰ While this notion is certainly true judging by Iran's policies, actions and its politicians' statements, it is not shared by the majority of the Iranian people, who would prefer their country to be part of a regional cooperative structure rather than seeking domination in the Persian Gulf. In a 2008 opinion poll only one in ten Iranians opted for the latter option, while almost half of the respondents chose cooperation as preferable *modus operandi* (World Public Opinion 2008a, 27).

²¹ The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) and other of its indices such as the Human Poverty Index (HPI) and the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) do not measure every aspect of development and often have to rely on data provided by countries themselves. Nevertheless, they offer a comprehensive tool for comparing and classifying countries in a well-established and accredited system.

²² Sen's definition of development as freedom cannot be used without pointing out the neoliberal paradigm on which it is based.

are still not granted many of the basic rights the international community - however this diffuse system might be defined - has agreed upon. Debatable as the true universality of human rights might be²³, even from a non-Western, non-Eurocentric point of view, the Iranian regime is one of the worst perpetrators against its own people (Amnesty International 2009).

Regional disparities and soaring urbanization trends are but some other indications of initial conditions for development which today are less favorable than they were at the time of the Islamic Revolution (Ferdowsi 2002, 421).

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States have been at odds with each other for decades. One of the many historical dividing wounds was inflicted by the CIA-led coup d'état against publicly elected nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953²⁴. Nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company proved to be going too far to be tolerable for the U.S. This was a blow to the evolution of democracy in Iran in particular and the Middle East in general. But it also stirred resentment from the Iranian people who are still awaiting a full American apology for this unlawful intervention in a domestic affair²⁵ (Shoamanesh 2008, 2). Moreover, in the same year, the United States supported Mohammad Reza Shah's return to power. Setting up the Iranian secret service SAVAK, the American CIA and Israeli Mossad assured its consolidation by offering the Shah-en-Shah (King of Kings) a powerful tool of oppression against his own people (Buchta 2004, 144). With the Islamic Revolution of 1979 relations between the two countries quickly deteriorated and were further strained by the *Iranian hostage crisis* which lasted from 1979 to 1981. Diplomatic relations have been virtually non-existent during the last thirty

²³ The discussion about the universality of human rights has produced a vast field of publications and opinions. For a first overview, Menke and Pollman (2007) offer a comprehensive introduction to the topic of human rights in general, also discussing the concept of universality at length. Considering the particular aspect of Islam as a defining pillar of Iranian society, Bassam Tibi's (1996) seminal but controversial work on Islam and human rights conceptions as well as Ann Mayer's (1995) book on the same topic are highly recommendable.

²⁴ For a detailed account see Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes*, in which he depicts the history of the CIA and details how the overthrow of Mossadegh was the "[...] CIA's greatest single triumph [...]" (Weiner 2008, 92-105).

²⁵ In 2000, Madeleine Albright, then U.S. Secretary of State, admitted that "[t]he coup was clearly a setback for Iran's political development [...]" and acknowledged her understanding of "[...] why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs." (CNN 2000)

years, leaving Iran isolated²⁶. Despite some efforts to ameliorate the situation over the years several incidents have prevented these antagonists from normalizing their relationship (Khanna 2008, 227-228). Ironically, many of the foreign policy decision taken by the Bush administration strengthened Teheran's position in the region because both, Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan, were removed from power, thereby also ceding to be a threat to the Iranian regime (Taheri 2006, 104). Nevertheless, under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and George W. Bush relations further deteriorated when the U.S. president placed Iran in the already proverbial "Axis of Evil" (Bush 2002a) - after Iran had assisted in the Taliban's ouster in Afghanistan (Khanna 2008, 229) - and his Iranian counterpart threatened with the imminent destruction of the "satanic power of the United States" (Jaseb/Dahl 2008).

While the United Nations is calling for diplomacy, the U.S. is perceived by some as violating its Negative Assurance pledge under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) because it repeatedly threatened Iran with the possibility of a nuclear first strike (Shoamanesh 2008, 1).

In the year 2003, an opportunity for amelioration and eventually normalization of the situation presented itself. Iran sent a comprehensive negotiation proposal for a grand bargain to the U.S. (Parsi 2007, 241-244). Not only did the Islamic Republic acknowledge its sponsorship of terrorist organizations, in particular Hamas, it also offered to end this practice and support disarmament of Hezbollah, as well as full cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts, especially those targeted against al Qaeda. Most unexpectedly, Iran suggested its recognition of a two-state solution for the Israel-Palestine conflict based on the Arab League's Beirut Declaration. In return, Iran asked for an exchange of prisoners of the Iranian Mujahedin-e Khalq (MKO)²⁷, against al Qaeda fighters held in Iran, and a change of American rhetoric (*axis of evil*), hostility and interference in domestic affairs (ibid. 243-246). The proposal was doomed for failure when Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld declared that they would not "[...] speak to evil [...]" (ibid. 248). This wasted opportunity attributed further to the decline in relations between the two countries, leaving another unresolved issue for the next U.S. president.

²⁶ Nonetheless, the two countries established a means of communication via Switzerland, with the Swiss ambassador in Iran serving as a go-between (Parsi 2007, 246).

²⁷ The MKO was declared a terrorist organization by both the U.S. and the European Union.

The Islamic Republic is a party to the NPT, thereby vowing to abide its three main pillars: “[...] nonproliferation, disarmament, and the right to peacefully use nuclear technology [...]” (Williams/Wolfsthal 2005, 1). Back in the 1950s, Iran’s aspirations for a civil nuclear program were supported by the United States, France and Germany; “[...] at a time when Iran was being offered to buy US-made reprocessing facilities capable of delivering a complete 'nuclear fuel cycle', Richard Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were serving as White House Chief of Staff and Secretary of Defense respectively.” (Shoamanesh 2008, 3).

In June 2003, Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reported that during his visit to Iran in February 2003 he had learned that the country was pursuing a uranium enrichment program. This program had been conducted for years already but the Iranian government had not met its contractual obligations to *inter alia* report these actions (IAEA 2003a, 2). On the contrary, it had violated the NPT’s Safeguards Agreement in various instances over a period of 18 years (IAEA 2003b, 9). Eventually, Iran agreed to remedy its past failures by assenting to suspend “[...] all enrichment related and reprocessing activities in Iran, and specifically: to suspend all activities on the site of Natanz, not to produce feed material for enrichment processes and not to import enrichment related items” (ibid., 4).

In the following years, the European Union (EU) 3+3 group consisting of France, the United Kingdom and Germany, as well as China, Russia and the United States conducted ongoing diplomatic efforts to support Iran in its decision and provide it with incentives to abstain from further enrichment plans. Already at the end of 2005 though, the IAEA doubted Iran’s serious efforts to still comply with its promises. Hence, on 24 September 2005 it adopted a resolution (= GOV 2005/77) declaring that Iran was non-compliant with the IAEA’s Safeguards Agreement (IAEA 2005). Thereupon, the UN Security Council (2006b) also passed a resolution urging the Islamic Republic to end its enrichment program. Once again, the IAEA believed that Iran did not comply. The quickly escalating conflict between Iran and the IAEA drew great attention and led the (EU) 3+3 group to maintain ongoing discussions with the alleged perpetrator. The US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) publicized in November 2007 came to the conclusion that Iran had actually stopped its program in October 2003 and did not restart it until mid-2007 (National

Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 2007, 6). The report thereby stated a clearly different point of view than its predecessor in 2005 had done (*ibid.*, 9). Nonetheless, the estimate advised international vigilance towards Iran. Iran could probably produce a nuclear weapon already between 2010 and 2015 although it is more likely to reach this capability only after 2015, the report cautioned (*ibid.*, 7).

Certainly this threat will have to be one of the main priorities of the next U.S. president's foreign and developing policies (Miller/Parthemore/Campbell 2008).

The nuclear issue can be summed up as follows:

The United States has focused strictly on the military potential of Iran's nuclear program, ignoring its civilian uses and Iran's other commercial needs; the EU for many years ignored Iran's illicit nuclear and terrorist activities; undercutting American sanctions as it became Iran's largest trading partner; and Russia has sold nuclear reactor technology to Iran with little regard for the chain reaction it could set off. (Khanna 2008, 230)

But Iran poses challenges amass for the new president, besides this topic. On a completely different level but addressing similar concerns, Iran has drawn attention to itself on the topic of anti-Semitism.

To add insult to injury, the shocking comments of Iran's President concerning the wiping of another sovereign (Israel) off the map, his questioning of Holocaust, or calling 9/11 a 'suspect event', have done little to defuse the growing Western unease with Iran's nuclear program. (Shoamanesh 2008, 1)

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly threatened the state of Israel in its mere existence (Jaseb/Dahl 2008). His ramblings constantly stirred international outcry and heavy responses against his statements. His aims are manifold: not only does he seek to maintain a confrontational course against Israel and the U.S., proving that Iran won't be intimidated by diplomacy, sanctions or military threats, he also wants Iran to be recognized as the only true friend of the Palestinian people. This is a clear message to the entire Muslim and Arab World to join the cause and support the struggle (Shoamanesh 2008, 3). This stance is indeed popular among Arabs. Iran is perceived more and more benevolently, one of the main reasons being the Shi'ite country's ongoing support for Hezbollah (Miller/Parthemore/Campbell 2008, 12).

Drug trafficking is one more challenge. “Unable to control its long border with Afghanistan, Iran is the transit route for much of the \$65 billion annual trade in heroin and refined opium, to which an estimated one million Iranian adults are addicted” (Khanna 2008, 232).

Shi’ite Iran is a direct neighbor of Iraq, a country divided between Shi’a and Sunna. The two neighbors fought eight years against each other in the First Gulf War, which claimed hundreds of thousands of deaths on both sides, deepening a centuries-old rift. Iran never refrained from intervening in Iraqi domestic affairs, backing, training and financing militant Shiite groups in Iraq. Because of the *Third Gulf War* – the Iraq war – U.S. and Iran met for the first time in 3 decades for high-level talks. In May 2007, officials came together in Baghdad for a dialogue on the security situation in Iraq (Anderson 2007). In order to achieve lasting stability in the war-torn country this dialogue needs to be continued and bilateral agreements have to be reached. Sectarian unrest in Iraq is not in Iran’s best interest either. Muslim unity is an important end and means for Grand Ayatollah Khomeini who strives to be the Leader of all Muslims, Shi’ite and Sunni alike, and is intent on making Iran a pan-Islamic power. The U.S. on the other hand is believed to follow a *divide et impera* strategy in the Muslim world and is *inter alia* therefore perceived as a potent adversary (Sadjadpour 2008).

Last but not least, Iran possess approximately one-tenth of the world’s oil and natural gas reserves making it one of the biggest suppliers of these resources, highlighting its international importance.

It is of paramount importance to the U.S. if “[...] Iran, having succeeded in extending its influence from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, and which has systematically lied about its nuclear program in the past, [will] be peacefully dissuaded from its quest for regional dominance and strategic arms” (Oren 2007, 612).

6.1.1. John McCain - Bomb, Bomb, Bomb, Bomb, Bomb Iran!

When John McCain started singing the Beach Boys' hit "Barbara Ann", he drew instant laughter and applause. It was certainly one of his most outgoing moments in the whole election campaign and a very clear statement on his foreign policy principles. Not because the original song had any political implications, but because he changed the lyrics. John McCain was responding to a question a man in the audience of a town hall meeting asked:

'How many times do we have to prove that these people are blowing up people now, never mind if they get a nuclear weapon. [sic!] When do we send them an airmail message to Tehran?' [...] In response, McCain said, 'That old, eh, that old Beach Boys song, Bomb Iran'— which elicited laughter from the crowd. McCain then chuckled before briefly singing [...] 'Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, anyway, ah' (Gonyea 2007)

But not everyone reacted favorably to the Senator's show act; it also drew criticism and was cited almost every time he made another comment on Iran. John McCain certainly had more of a strategy to offer than a mere bombing of one of the U.S.' most determined opponents. But he was strongly inclined to use preemptive military intervention as a means of dealing with Iran and other potential threats. McCain believes that solving political problems militarily is a viable option. One such hypothetical situation according to the Arizona Senator would be Iran supplying Hezbollah with weapons of mass destruction. While he is well aware of the implications and the generally negative public perception of preemption ("It's very hard to run for president on this idea right now." (Goldberg 2008, 53-54)), McCain is steadfast in his belief. "[W]e cannot take the military option off the table. But we have to make it very clear it's the last option. There's only one thing worse than the United States exercising a military option, and that is Iran having nuclear weapons", he told a reporter (FOX News 2006). Further detailing his strategy, the Republican nominee asserted that a strategic bombing of Iran was only acceptable (without the consent of Congress) if there was an imminent threat (Savage 2007).

It is not only the American public who opposes the idea of further preemptive military strikes but also a wide range of foreign policy experts who do not believe in a successful or positive outcome of a military engagement in Iran. Not only would it lead to a strengthening of Anti-American sentiment within Iran, but in the whole region putting positive peaceful development in the Middle East at risk (Miller/Parthemore/Campbell 2008, 6). Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq could and most likely would be de-stabilized in the wake of a U.S. attack. "Democracy, moderation, and lofty goals for setting the Middle East on

the right course will be overshadowed by anger and extremism.” (Nasr 2008, 107). Iran would certainly suffer a major blow to its nuclear program by military strikes, especially those conducted with *surgical precision* against Iran’s nuclear facilities. Nonetheless, it is doubtful if that would lead to a permanent or even long-lasting resolution of an Iranian nuclear threat. The Islamic Republic would presumably react with an even stronger commitment to its pursuit of nuclear capabilities. And it “[...] is unlikely to lead to an uprising for regime change. [...] [M]ilitary confrontation premised on the need to halt the country’s nuclear program will only trigger Iranian nationalistic sentiments, galvanizing the masses behind the regime.” (Shoamanesh 2008, 3)²⁸. An attack could also lead to results similar to those after the ouster of Mossadegh: setbacks to progress of democratization in Iran and the whole Middle East. Also from a more pragmatic point of view, a war or even *only* a military attack on another oil-rich country could “[...] result in further economic decline, induced partly by an expected sharp rise in oil prices” (ibid., 4).

In general, John McCain favors tougher sanctions as a means of dealing with Iran over military action but he strictly opposes high-level talks with President Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad. In a speech given at AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, John McCain positioned himself opposite from Barack Obama, criticizing the Democratic nominee’s propositions: “The Iranians have spent years working toward a nuclear program and the idea that they now seek nuclear weapons because we refuse to engage in Presidential level talks is a serious misreading of history.” (McCain 2008c) But even the path of sanctioning Iran might not be a viable option for the next president. Realist think tanks such as the National Committee on American Foreign Policy also doubt its success, believing that it could lead to a form of *mini cold war* which could last for decades before achieving the desired outcome (Taheri 2006, 105).

Critics close to the Obama campaign were convinced that even McCain’s plans of mere deterrence instead of outright aggression were not likely to succeed. Threats against the Iranian regime hardly ever caused the effects desired. On the contrary, they strengthened

²⁸ Under the light of current events after the 2009 presidential election in Iran this assumption cannot be taken for granted anymore. However, despite the ongoing protests sudden regime change is not likely.

the position of Ahmadinejad and other political and clerical leaders. Threats against Iran raised the Iranian people's support for its leaders and sweetened the perspective of having Iranian nuclear capabilities – a deterrent against a menacing U.S. (Miller/Parthemore/Campbell 2008, 16).

John McCain strictly rejected the idea of meeting with leaders such as President Ahmadi-nejad without pre-conditions being met. On the contrary, he was convinced that this would “[...] legitimize and give a propaganda platform to a person that is espousing the extermination of the state of Israel, [...] giving them more credence in the world arena and therefore saying, they've probably been doing the right thing, because you will sit down across the table from them [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a) By invoking Ronald Reagan's refusal to sit down with Soviet leaders Brezhnev and Andropov until Gorbachev initiated perestroika and glasnost he was underpinning his argument that he was willing to “[...] sit down with anybody, but there's got to be pre-conditions.” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). In general, he assured the media that he would not engage in direct talk with Iran as face-to-face talks were overrated in general (FOX News 2007b).

Furthermore, McCain was worried about the U.N. Security Council not acting appropriately and effectively because of China's and Russia's own interests in the region. Therefore, he promoted his *League of Democracies* which, according to McCain, would be the most suitable vehicle to “[...] impose sanctions and to cut off [...] many of the things and benefits that the Iranians are now getting from other democracies” (CFR 2007e). Apart from this elitist multilateralist approach of working together with certain allies, the Republican nominee adhered to his conviction that “[...] at the end of the day, it's the United States of America that will make the final decision.” (ibid.)

For all the reasons given above, Iran is a major security and policy concern for the United States. McCain perceived the only Shi'ite and non-Arab Muslim country in the Middle East as “[...] the world's chief sponsor of terrorism [which] threatens to destabilize the entire Middle East from Basra to Beirut” (McCain 2008c, 2). He expressed these views in nearly every televised debate before and after becoming the Republican Party's presiden-

tial nominee. In addition, McCain often addressed the special implications for Israel. He is a very strong advocate of Israel and its interests and believes that there is a natural forever-lasting alliance between the only non-Muslim country in the Middle East and the United States (ibid., 7). Therefore, “[t]he United States of America has committed itself to never allowing another Holocaust” (Goldberg 2008, 54). The notion of American responsibility for the protection of Israel and the belief in a special connection between the two states is commonplace in the U.S.²⁹

6.1.2. Sarah Palin

In the case of Iran the Republican vice presidential nominee conveyed virtually the same opinion as John McCain. In the few statements she had made on foreign policy in general and on Iran in special, the then-Alaska Governor repeatedly identified the Islamic Republic as the number one state sponsor of terrorism (Palin 2008) and as one of the greatest dangers to the U.S. (FOX News 2008). Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in particular was perceived as being extremely dangerous and even mentally unstable by the vice presidential nominee (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b). A (nuclear) armed Iran would not only be a threat to the existence of Israel (ibid.) but also to the entire world because of Iran’s support for terrorists worldwide (Palin 2008). Moreover, *dictators* such as the Iranian president “[...] hate America and hate what we stand for, [...] our freedoms, our democracy, our tolerance, our respect for women’s rights [...]”, Palin is convinced.

When it comes to Israel, she was adamant that the U.S. cannot and should not “[...] second guess what Israel has to do to secure its nation,” even if that meant Israel was taking out Iranian nuclear facilities as a first strike or a preemptive measure (ABC News 2008).

Several times Sarah Palin laid out her plan for dealing with the Islamic Republic. First, she believed, the Iraq war had to be won in order to guarantee the fledgling democracy’s

²⁹ The strong bond between Israel and the U.S. is based largely on the experience of World War II as well as on the perception of shared values based on a common Judeo-Christian heritage (see above). In a debate during the Republican Primaries, Representative Tom Tancredo from Colorado, for example, expressed the opinion that a threat to the existence of Israel was also a potential threat to the existence of the U.S. (MSNBC 2007d).

development, whereas failure would have further strengthened the position of Iranian extremists (Palin 2008).

Second, in an interview with ABC, she called for the pursuit and the implementation of those sanctions already in place against Iran (ABC News 2008), while at another time acknowledging the fact that so far they have shown little success (Palin 2008). Yet, she adhered to the notion that the U.S. “[...] cannot back off [and has to put] diplomatic pressure [...]” on Iran (ABC News 2008). One part of this diplomatic effort was described by Palin as “[...] lining out clear objectives and having your friends and your allies ready to back you up there and have sanctions lined up also before any kind of presidential summit would take place” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b). In an interview with CBS’ Katie Couric, in which Palin offered a poor performance according to most critics, the Republican running mate reassured her host that Barack Obama’s proposal to meet with Ahmadinejad without pre-conditions was “[...] beyond naïve [and] bad judgment [...]” (Couric 2008). She thereby partially contradicted one of Republican nominee McCain’s most important advisors on foreign policy. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had advocated meeting with Iran without conditions but didn’t believe this should happen on a presidential level (CNN 2008b). The controversy was stirred further in several debates between McCain and Obama.

Sarah Palin was supposed to give a speech at an AIPAC anti-Iran rally when president Ahmadinejad visited the United Nations in September 2008, coinciding with a speech of Senator Clinton at the same event. Because the organizers did not want their protest to become part of the election campaign rhetoric both speakers were disinvited. However, Palin’s speech was publicized in the conservative New York Sun. Therein the Governor elaborated on her perception that “Anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are part of Iran’s official ideology and murder is part of its official policy.” Despite the fact that no other Middle Eastern country besides Israel houses such a large Jewish population as Iran does and that this “[...] community benefits from constitutional protection and is allocated a seat in Parliament” (Shoamanesh 2008, 3), Palin was correct that “[...] the Iranian government is both oppressive and barbaric [...]” in the treatment of its minorities and most vulnerable parts of society (Palin 2008). However, she spoke vaguely of genocide and the wish to hold president Ahmadinejad accountable for it under international law, without ever specifying these accusations (Palin 2008).

To sum up, Sarah Palin stood for the same approach as John McCain, calling for tougher sanctions against and disinvestment in Iran, repudiating direct diplomacy without preconditions, and assuring unconditional support for Israel as well as leaving the option of possible military intervention on the table.

6.1.3. Barack Obama – Talk and Engage

The Illinois Senator's strategy for Iran was comprehensively laid out in the Democratic presidential debate in Philadelphia in October 2007:

[...] what we should be doing is reaching out aggressively to our allies but also talking to our enemies and focusing on those areas where we do not accept their actions, whether it be terrorism or developing nuclear weapons, but also talking to Iran directly about the potential carrots that we can provide, in terms of them being involved in the World Trade Organization, or beginning to look at the possibilities of diplomatic relations being normalized. (The New York Times 2007a)

Obama's proposal of high-level talks with foes and friends alike was a bold push for a change in U.S. foreign policy. It came under scrutiny from many directions but found also positive resonance with a large part of the electorate. He believes that "[...] personal diplomacy [...] can bring about a new era in the region [the Middle East]. [T]hat means talking to everybody. We've got to talk to our enemies and not just our friends." (CFR 2007f). Suggestions by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), a relatively new Washington D.C. based think tank working on defense policies, military strategy and national security issues (CNAS n.d.), are similar to those of Barack Obama. This comes as no surprise, as CNAS is perceived as being relatively close to the Obama campaign³⁰.

A 2008 opinion poll shows that large majorities of both the American and the Iranian people want to see relations between their countries improve (World Public Opinion 2008a, 9,13). They also both favor direct intergovernmental talks as the first and best step towards this goal (ibid., 17). Even realists suggest that this might be the only viable option for the next American president. Without offering a great bargain the U.S. might have to face an even greater challenge than Iraq or Afghanistan have proven to be (Taheri 2006, 105-106).

³⁰ Obama hired several of the think tank's researchers as White House staffers, after becoming president.

Criticism concerning Obama's push for direct talks with the Iranian leadership was voiced in virtually every single debate might it have been Democratic, Republican or the three Presidential Debates between him and John McCain. Especially the latter and his running mate Sarah Palin strictly opposed talking to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (see above). Obama adjusted his position accordingly and acknowledged that "[...] Ahmadinejad is not the most powerful person in Iran. So he may not be the right person to talk to." (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a) The same notion was brought forward by several scholars. In his book "Hidden Iran" Ray Takeyh (2006), a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and renowned expert of Iranian history and politics, expressed his conviction that the U.S. needed a new approach for dealing with Iran and puts forward the argument that Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Revolution and arguably the most powerful man in the country, would be the best person to address concerning Iranian foreign policy³¹.

Obama asserted that without preconditions "[...] doesn't mean that you invite them over for tea one day. What it means is that we don't do what we've been doing, which is to say, 'Until you agree to do exactly what we say, we won't have direct contacts with you.'" (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). Furthermore he felt compelled to differentiate "[...] between preconditions and preparation. Of course we've got to do preparations, starting with low-level diplomatic talks, and it may not work, because Iran is a rogue regime" (ibid.). Taking the Iranian standpoint into consideration, the next U.S. president might have no other option at hand because Iran already refused to accept negotiations which are based on preconditions being met (Slavin 2007, 42).

At the same time, the Democratic presidential nominee was willing to "[...] make an absolute commitment that we will do everything we need to do to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons" (CFR 2007f).

Senator Obama did not exclude the possibility of military action from the outset. But such actions were means of last resort to him when all other "[...] measures have been exhausted and Iran is on the verge of obtaining a nuclear weapon" (The New York Times

³¹ The Carnegie Endowment fellow Karim Sadjadpour (2008) devoted a whole book to Iran's constitutionally and politically most powerful leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

2007a). “I think it would be a profound mistake for us to initiate a war with Iran”, (MSNBC 2007b) he explained in the South Carolina Democratic debate in April 2007. He further stated, “Until we have gathered the international community to put the squeeze on Iran economically, then we shouldn't be having conversations about attacks in Iran” (CFR 2007f).

Apart from diplomatic engagement, he strove to impose *tougher* sanctions on Iran. In order to put these in place he was looking for cooperation from Russia and China, countries which are “[...] not democracies, but have extensive trade with Iran but potentially have an interest in making sure Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). Raising Iran's cost of continuing its nuclear program should ultimately tip the favor in the direction of compliance (Obama 2007a, 4). The criticism brought forward against John McCain's plans for sanctioning Iran was also valid in this context. An additional aspect was the question whether Iran had any confidence that the sanctions would truly be lifted if it changed its behavior and showed compliance. High-level diplomacy might therefore be a means of (re-) establishing a foundation for a new relation of trust.

Although acknowledging the overlap of issues at stake concerning Iraq and Iran, Obama refuted the notion that troop presence in Iraq should be increased because of a hidden agenda for containing Iran (The New York Times 2007b). He came to the same conclusions as Amir Taheri (2006) that the war in Iraq ultimately strengthened Iran's position by removing one of its most pivotal adversaries from power (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). He also went along the lines of John McCain's assessment that a nuclear Iran would be a serious threat to Israel, a *stalwart ally* of the U.S. In addition, he feared that an arms race in the Middle East could be triggered (ibid.).

Concluding, Barack Obama recognized the historical burden of Iran being “[...] a classic case of something biting us on the ankle, when we assisted in overthrowing the democratically elected regime that was replaced by the Shah” (Goldberg 2007), and proposed a change of direction as to the Islamic Republic.

6.1.4. Joe Biden

Like his contenders, Joe Biden also believed that Iran posed an important threat to the United States. To him it was a *long-term* issue however which could not be resolved by mere application of the Bush Doctrine and coercion (MSNBC 2007b). For Biden Iran was not the pivotal challenge in the Middle East though. When asked how he would respond to a nuclear Iran he answered: “What is the greatest threat to the United States of America: 2.6 kilograms of highly enriched uranium in Tehran or an out of control Pakistan?” (The New York Times 2007a). Biden clearly focused a lot of his foreign policy attention on Pakistan (see below). Nonetheless, he committed himself to doing “[...] all in my power to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons [...]” (ibid.). In the October 2008 vice presidential debate he reminded his challenger Sarah Palin that “[...] nuclear weapons require a nuclear arms control regime” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b), alluding to his long-lasting commitment to this cause.

The Senator from Delaware also acknowledged the fact that Iran was “[...] closer to a bomb. Its proxies now have a major stake in Lebanon, as well as in the Gaza Strip with Hamas” (ibid.). The approach Joe Biden would commit himself to was similar to the one chosen by Barack Obama: an amalgam of “[...] diplomatic engagement and economic pressure [...]” (Biden 2007) to both prevent a war with Iran as well as a nuclear Iran. Just like Obama, Biden did not believe in a military *modus operandi*. On the contrary, he rebutted the idea that a lasting solution could be achieved that way. On the one hand, striking Iran would lead to another major conflict, one that the U.S. was not prepared for and for which its military power was too overstretched at the moment. On the other hand, “[a]ir strikes can set back Iran’s nuclear program, but they can’t stop Tehran from restarting it” (ibid.). In opposing any non-political solution to the challenges Iran is posing, Biden went as far as promising a call for impeachment should President Bush have started a war with the Islamic Republic without Congressional approval (ibid.).

In general, Biden was very outspoken in his criticism of the Bush administration and its approach towards the Middle East. Especially the concept of regime change was a thorn in his side which he would replace with a strategy of conduct change. In his forthright manner he explained: “What we’re saying to everybody in Iran is: Look, by the way, give up the one thing [uranium enrichment and plutonium production programs] that keeps us

from attacking you and after that we're going to attack you, we're going to take you down" (CFR 2007a). Not only would this approach produce exactly the opposite outcome as intended, it would alienate other Middle Eastern allies from the U.S.. Biden therefore proposes to work close with partners, choosing a multilateral approach of sanctions and *positive incentives* – the same ones offered by Barack Obama - rather than unilateral threats. However, these efforts would be spearheaded by the U.S. who should offer open talks.

It was also important for Senator Biden to *connect the dots* and see the interlinking problems concerning Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. To him, these issues had to be dealt with together and could not be separated from each other (Biden 2007). This holistic perspective was typical for Biden's approach to foreign policy.

6.2. Afghanistan

On October 7, 2001, exactly four weeks after the attacks of 9/11 Operation Enduring Freedom was launched. Together with the support of the United Kingdom U.S. military forces invaded Afghanistan with the goal of ousting the ruling Taliban from power, capturing Osama bin Laden – the alleged mastermind behind 9/11 – and installing a friendly regime instead (Katzmann 2009, 8). Initial success was followed by re-focusing U.S. interests on Iraq. The newly opened front in this second war of the Bush administration distracted attention from a developing country and failing state, leaving it behind as a *forgotten front* in the *war on terror*. Therefore, it remains one of the most challenging tasks for the new U.S. president.

Afghanistan looks back onto a centuries-old and rich history. The territory which is today accepted as the country of Afghanistan finally emerged out of the Great Game of British and Russian rivalry in Central Asia in the mid 19th century, serving as a buffer between the respective zones of influence (Schnarr 2006, 80). It succeeded in maintaining its independence, and remained one of the few countries which never became European colonies. "[T]he country's very existence is owed to strategic blunders and colonial anomalies" (Khanna 2008, 108). The Kingdom of Afghanistan, lasting for almost six decades, ended

in 1973 with a bloodless coup transforming the monarchy into a republic. Already in 1978 the next coup d'état installed a Marxist government which renamed the country Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The 1970s represented a period of instability and economic crisis for the country which was also ensnarled in internal struggles culminating in civil war (Zingel 2002a, 21). In the midst of the Cold War many contending political forces tried to impinge on Afghanistan and pull it into their zone of influence. External subversion was commonplace with, for example, the KGB infiltrating universities and other organizations. The same decade was also a time of great conflict in the Arab world. Events such as the revolution in Iran in 1979 diverted attention from Afghanistan even when the Soviet Union (SU) invaded it in the same year. Using the internal political turmoil as a cover, the invader claimed that it had been invited into Afghanistan by the country itself (ibid.).

In the following decade Afghanistan struggled for independence from the Soviet Union. Diverse guerilla groups had already been active for years or were founded specifically to fight the occupation. Many of them were religiously motivated and believed in jihad³² against the unholy Soviet Union. They were armed not only with weapons but also with the Koran which was being widely distributed among the population by the mujahedin. The Arabic term *muğāhid* can be translated in several ways, literally describing *a person who struggles*, and is today widely used to refer to fundamentalist Muslim insurgent or guerilla fighters. Despite rivalries between different Afghan factions they were united in their struggle against a common enemy and referred to themselves as mujahedin. The ruling government tried to bridge the gaps between religious insurgents and their loyalty to the SU proclaiming Islam as state religion and convening *loya jirgas*³³ as constituent assemblies (Schnarr 2006, 81). At the same time Afghanistan became a major focal point for the United States in their rivalry with the Soviet Union. Until the invasion, the country had been perceived as a poor strategic backwater. But in 1979 it transformed into a U.S. stepping stone towards Pakistan and other countries in the region, all part of a strategic

³² While the word jihad is mentioned several times in the Quran its definition remains ambiguous. The meaning can be described as *effort for god's cause* which encompasses a broad field of duties ranging from a person's internal spiritual struggle to external warfare (Lohlker 2008, 243-244). Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic motivated terrorism have – in the Western perception – reduced this complexity to terrorist acts such as suicide bombings directed at a detested Western modernity.

³³ A *loya jirga* is a *great assembly* of tribal leaders – a forum to settle national affairs used primarily by Pashto tribes in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It holds a firm place in Afghan culture and tradition and is still in use today (see below) (BBC News 2002).

corridor to major oil fields. U.S. support for mujahedin fighters was therefore not surprising (Zingel 2002a, 21).

The United States and Saudi Arabia poured \$7.2 billion of covert aid into the jihad against the Soviets, the vast majority of which was channeled by the ISI [Inter Services Intelligence, the largest Pakistani intelligence service], with the acquiescence of the Central Intelligence Agency, to the most radical religious elements, deliberately marginalizing [...] those parties with a less radical, more nationalist political vision for the future of Afghanistan. Foreign militants flowed into Pakistan for training and then deployed into Afghanistan. Among them were several thousand funded and paid by Osama bin Laden. Relationships were forged that continue to plague the United States. (Johnson/Mason 2008, 70-71)

Especially U.S.-sponsored and organized supply of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles seemed to be the tipping point in the conflict as they diminished Soviet air in favor of the mujahedin. “[T]he Afghan rebels were killing Soviet soldiers, downing Soviet helicopter gunships, and inflicting deep wound [sic!] on the Soviet self-image. The CIA had done what it set out to do: to give the Soviets their Vietnam” (Weiner 2008, 486).

On February 15, 1989 the Soviet Union finally withdrew its troops – an action it had already agreed to in the UN-brokered Geneva Accords of 1988 (Katzmann 2009, 2). Hundreds of thousands of Afghanis had lost their lives and over five million had fled during the occupation, finding refuge in Pakistan, Iran, and many other countries, leaving their motherland diminished of a third of its population (Zingel 2002a, 20).

U.S. – Afghan relations continuously oscillated between benign neglect and intensive involvement. Until the Soviet invasion Afghanistan never appeared on the radar of U.S. foreign policy interests. As quickly as this invasion drew U.S. attention to the country as quickly did it wither again with the SU’s withdrawal. “[T]he aid stopped in December 1991 [...]. The United States government decided it had no further interests in Afghanistan” (Coll 2004). In addition, the Afghan leadership under President Najibullah was left behind virtually powerless. Consequently, the 1990s constituted a critical period for Afghanistan’s development. When Western attention and interest retreated, local conflicts started to re-emerge. “[The] absence of a nationally accepted leadership allowed the Taliban to emerge strongly and aggressively” (Nojumi 2002, 121).

Afghanistan is often described as a case onto itself due to its many particularities. One of them is the so-called Durand line. This porous, approximately 2500 kilometer long, line of demarcation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is based on a British-Afghan agreement from 1893 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2009). Some Afghans never accepted this boundary which divided ethnic groups into adjacent states. The Taliban (see below), however, never questioned it – one of the reasons for Pakistani support for that militant Islamist group.

Nonetheless, conflicts within the country grew ever more virulent. Subsequently to the Soviet withdrawal, the Taliban seemed to provide a breathing spell from violence for the Afghani people. Therefore it was possible for them to easily take over villages and spread their influence. Some militant Islamist groups had been established before the Soviet occupation but grew significantly during that time. One of the main foundations for their ascendance to power was laid by refugees hosted especially in Pakistan but also in Iran. Afghans were indoctrinated in refugee camps and madrasas. Particularly Pakistan had a strong interest in gaining influence over Afghanistan which was seen as a potential ally in regional conflicts predominantly with India. Having had received *inter alia* financial aid, Islamist groups developed strong ties to the Pakistani intelligence agencies, in particular to the ISI, and became its willing partners. “The empowerment of the Islamists in Pakistan [...] and their access to international assistance, especially from the United States, enabled the Afghan Islamists to brutally suppress the moderate Muslims and pro-democracy resistance forces” (Nojumi 2008, 95). The influx of foreign militants, many of whom were paid by Osama bin Laden, via Pakistan into Afghanistan fomented further unrest (Johnson/Mason 2008, 71). Boarding schools for boys were developed along the Pakistani-Afghan border providing for a future generation of preachers and multipliers of the Islamist message among the Afghan population (Nojumi 2008, 97). One of these groups was the Taliban (Arabic for *students*). Under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban was formed in Kandahar Province in 1994. Support from Benazir Bhutto’s government in Pakistan enabled them to take hold of their province and expand their influence over Herat to Kabul (ibid., 101). This, in turn, led their adversaries to join forces, forming the Northern Alliance. Afghanistan was divided into two zones of influence, preventing further fragmentation of the country. From 1996 onwards, the Taliban successfully expanded their power and pushed back their enemies (Schnarr 2006, 84). “The Taliban progressively lost international and domestic support as it imposed strict

adherence to Islamic customs in areas it controlled and employed harsh punishments, including executions” (Katzmann 2009, 5). Additionally, they hosted the leadership of al Qaeda and refused to hand over bin Laden to the U.S. “After the August 7, 1998, Al Qaeda bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Clinton Administration progressively pressured the Taliban, imposing U.S. sanctions and achieving adoption of some U.N. sanctions as well” (ibid., 6). Until 9/11 the Bush administration adhered to the same approach but drastically changed direction the day the attacks occurred.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368 of September 12, 2001 said that the Security Council: ‘expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond’ (implying force) to the September 11 attacks. This is widely interpreted as a U.N. authorization for military action in response to the attacks, but it did not explicitly authorize Operation Enduring Freedom to oust the Taliban. Nor did the Resolution specifically reference Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which allows for responses to threats to international peace and security. (ibid., 7)

Together with the Northern Alliance U.S. forces ousted the Taliban. Mullah Omar fled Kandahar already on December 9, 2001, thereby setting the date perceived as the end of the Taliban regime. Subsequent fighting pushed Taliban influence in Afghanistan further back, and led then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to declare the end of major combat on May 1, 2003 (ibid., 8). Already on December 5, 2001, several Afghani factions, including the Northern Alliance, signed the *Bonn Agreement* which installed an interim administration under the leadership of Hamid Karzai. Furthermore, it authorized an international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. The ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) came into existence only two weeks later and has been fulfilling its mandate ever since (ibid., 9). A *loya jirga* in 2002 set out a roadmap for a new constitution proclaimed in 2003 and elections on the presidential, provincial and district level held in 2004 and 2005 respectively (ibid., 10-11).

Decades of wars have left Afghanistan fragmented on a multitude of levels. Ethnicity proved to be one of the fault lines preventing lasting stabilization in the country. It cannot be misread as a root of the conflict though, but instead it has to be recognized as a result of political and military group’s mobilizations over the years.

Afghanistan ranks among the world’s poorest developing countries. An HDI of 0.345 “[...] places Afghanistan 174th out of 178 countries – ahead of only four other countries,

all of these in sub-Saharan Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Niger” (Center for Policy and Human Development 2007, 18-19). Its “[...] budget is made up almost entirely of Western aid, but most such assistance is actually spent on overhead, security, and salaries, with much of the remainder lost to corruption” (Khanna 2008, 109). Almost a third of the country’s population is undernourished and not even a fourth of Afghan adults are literate, one of the lowest rates in the world (Center for Policy and Human Development 2007, 23). 41.9% of Afghans will not survive to the age of 40 and 257 out of 1000 children die before their fifth birthday (*ibid.*, 27). Infectious diseases such as Malaria or Tuberculosis are extremely widespread. Malaria can be contracted in 60% of the country and the incidence rate is one of the highest worldwide. Furthermore, “[m]any factors increase the likelihood of an [HIV/AIDS] epidemic breaking out [...], including the prevalence of intravenous drug use and paid sex. The large number of refugees and displaced peoples, [...] illiteracy, and lack of access to information [...] all contribute to Afghanistan’s vulnerability [...]” (*ibid.*, 28-29). An amalgam of social, political, economic, and health indicators paint the same picture: Afghanistan is a failed state. According to the Fund for Peace it ranks number seven in the world after several African countries and Iraq (The Fund for Peace 2009).

Although Afghanistan presents the rare occasion of a territorially limited conflict whose roots are to be found within itself, its impact can be felt in the whole region. The localized conflict in Afghanistan has destabilizing effects on its neighbors. Simultaneously, these neighboring countries are part of the problem due to their involvement in undermining Afghan stability. For a long lasting solution to be established Afghanistan’s neighbors will need the right incentives to become stabilizing agents. As it is virtually impossible to disentangle the future of Afghanistan from that of its neighbors these countries will have to realize that their own vital interests are at stake. Particularly its “[...] ambiguous and porous border [with Pakistan] gives the Taliban the ability to move freely amongst the Pashtun population. The lack of indigenous security enables the Taliban to recruit, train, plan, and conduct operations in relative safety” (Downey, et al. 2008). Furthermore, several international stakeholders such as the United States, the European Union, NATO and the Worldbank have expressed their interest in Afghanistan. A tangible solution which allows the failed state to re-establish itself will need to address not only their concerns but also those of the Afghan people. State-building efforts focusing on security and good go-

vernance will need to be accompanied by incentives fostering nation-building if they want to be successful (Schnarr 2006, 88). In her seminal work, advising a change of direction in U.S. policies towards Afghanistan, Center for Strategic and International Studies fellow Caroline Wadhams lists five challenges Afghanistan poses for the U.S.: the weakness of the Afghan government, deteriorating security, stalled reconstruction, the increasing opium production and the terrorist safe haven in Pakistan. In order to deny al Qaeda sanctuary in Afghanistan and provide its people with a safe and stable state these issues will have to be addressed (Wadhams/Korb 2007, 1-3)³⁴.

6.2.1. John McCain – From Muddling Through to a New Surge

Compared to the other Middle Eastern countries discussed, Afghanistan does not appear to be very relevant to John McCain. His proposition to ameliorate the situation in the failed state is analogous to his strategy for Iraq: a surge.

John McCain seems to have a history of neglecting Afghanistan as a topic in foreign relations. Already on September 12, 2001, he talked about attacking other countries apart from Afghanistan, closely focusing his attention on Iraq (Kirkpatrick 2008, A1). Two years later, in November 2003, he commented on the situation in Iraq before the Council on Foreign Relations. In response to a question, he also touched on the issue of Afghanistan, which obviously did not concern him as much as Iraq did. While the Senator was aware of problems along the Afghan-Pakistani border and the limited rule of law the central government was able to impose, he still hoped that “[...] in the long term, we may muddle through in Afghanistan” (McCain 2003). Furthermore, he believed that the U.S. invasion had been a true accomplishment. “Afghanistan, we don’t read about anymore, because it’s succeeded” (The Charlie Rose Show 2005), he explained in an interview in 2005.

As will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters “[t]he U.S. invasion of Iraq took the pressure off al Qaeda in the Pakistani badlands and opened new doors for the group in the Middle East. It also played directly into the hands of al Qaeda leaders by seemingly confirming their claim that the United States was an imperialist force, which helped them reinforce various local alliances” (Riedel 2007, 26).

³⁴ For further discussion, see chapter 6.4. on Pakistan.

In all the primary debates the Republican Party held, Afghanistan never surfaced as a topic. No journalist ever asked any questions related to the country and U.S. involvement therein. And although John McCain introduced several aspects of politics in the Middle East when answering questions on Iraq or his foreign policy expertise, he never touched on the first war of the Bush administration and the current situation there. This is especially noteworthy, as McCain oftentimes laid out his plans for catching Osama bin Laden and dealing with al Qaeda. In addition, the Senator's proposed national security strategy published on his website did not include any mentioning of Afghanistan (McCain Palin 2008 2008a).

By the time John McCain faced Barack Obama in the televised presidential debates, his initial approach had changed. Already in 2007, he had once admitted that the U.S. needed to recommit itself to Afghanistan. Moreover, he stressed not only military engagement but also U.S. support for overcoming existing "[...] political deficiencies in judicial reform, reconstruction, governance, and anticorruption efforts" (McCain 2007b, 20). In the first debate, he acknowledged historic shortfalls of the U.S. approach to Afghanistan in the 1990s:

I won't repeat the mistake that I regret enormously, and that is, after we were able to help the Afghan freedom fighters and drive the Russians out of Afghanistan, we basically washed our hands of the region. And the result over time was the Taliban, Al Qaida, and a lot of the difficulties we are facing today. So we can't ignore those lessons of history. (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a)

A second lesson of history McCain wanted to learn was from the ongoing U.S. war in Iraq. The surge, which had in McCain's eyes worked for Iraq, was the key component of the strategy he formulated for dealing with Afghanistan.

It is the same overall strategy. Of course, we have to do some things tactically [...]. We have to double the size of the Afghan army. We have to have a streamlined NATO command structure. We have to do a lot of things. We have to work much more closely with the Pakistanis.

But most importantly, we have to have the same strategy [...] of the surge in Iraq, and that's the same kind of strategy of go out and secure and hold and allow people to live normal lives. And once they feel secure, then they lead normal, social, economic, political lives, the same thing that's happening in Iraq today.

So I have confidence that General Petraeus, working with the Pakistanis, working with the Afghans, doing the same job that he did in Iraq, will [succeed] again. We will succeed [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c)

Military analysts came to the same conclusions as McCain: “A surge would establish and maintain a continuous presence in areas currently dominated by the Taliban, allow security forces to relentlessly pursue the enemy, and support the training of additional Afghan army and police units to augment, and eventually replace, the surge forces” (Downey, et al. 2008). Apart from this *civil-military partnership*, McCain promised to appoint an “Afghanistan Czar [...] a highly-respected national security leader, based in the White House and reporting directly to the President, whose sole mission will be to ensure we bring the war in Afghanistan to a successful end” (Halperin 2008). But a mere raise of troop levels would neither sufficiently fulfill the requirements of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy nor those of a long term perspective of nation and state building. McCain had demonstrated that he would focus primarily on military options and take civilian strategies into account only later. “State-building was initially an afterthought for the United States and the international mission” (Wadhams/Korb 2007, 9). It still was for John McCain in the election campaign.

6.2.2. Sarah Palin

Afghanistan, together with Iraq, was the central front in the war on terror in Sarah Palin’s opinion. The Alaska Governor believed in military solutions concerning Afghanistan. Just like John McCain she asserted that additional U.S. troops were needed on the ground of the failed state (Couric 2008).

Shortly after being chosen by John McCain as his running mate, Sarah Palin went to New York during the U.N. General Assembly session in September 2008. Before giving her first official interview as vice presidential nominee, she received several briefings on foreign policy by Republican advisor former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and certain foreign heads of state. Apart from handshake-photos only little information was publicized on the content of these talks. Hamid Karzai was one of the elect few who met with Governor Palin during this visit to New York. The Afghan president was pleased with

Palin asking the right questions on his country. He was also the first foreign head of state the Republican vice presidential nominee had ever met (Holland 2008). Palin primarily recounted the following aspect of this meeting: “And I asked President Karzai, ‘Is that what you are seeking, also? That strategy that has worked in Iraq that John McCain had pushed for, more troops? A counterinsurgency strategy?’ And he said, ‘yes.’ And he also showed great appreciation for what America and American troops are providing in his country” (Couric 2008).

Palin further elaborated on details of John McCain’s military-civilian strategy. She stated that what was being done in Afghanistan at that moment was what a President John McCain would continue to do: “We’re fighting terrorists, and we’re securing democracy, and we’re building schools for children there so that there is opportunity in that country, also. There will be a big difference there, and we will win in -- in Afghanistan, also.” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b) Nevertheless, she also recommended following General Petraeus’ advice: “The surge principles, not the exact strategy, but the surge principles that have worked in Iraq need to be implemented in Afghanistan, also”. To her that “[...] would be a difference with the Bush administration” (ibid.).

In comparison to John McCain, Palin addressed more and different aspects of a strategy which encompasses not only military but also civilian approaches. However, no substantial information was provided on how these propositions would look like in detail.

6.2.3. Barack Obama – A Raise in Troop Levels and Sustained Diplomacy

In his campaign, Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama made it very clear that he was certain that instead of Iraq, Afghanistan was the main front in “[...] the war on terrorism [because it] started in Afghanistan and it needs to end there” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). Relying on national intelligence estimates he believed that in 2008 al Qaeda had regained substantial portions of its strength prior to 2001 (The New York Times 2008a) and was securing its bases in the Pakistani-Afghan border region (ABC News 2007).

The reason for this severe deterioration of the situation was a failure of the Bush administration: negligence of Afghanistan and a re-orientation of strategy by starting the Iraq war.

“[P]art of the reason that we didn't go after bin Laden as aggressively as we should have is we were distracted by a war of choice, and that's the flaw of the Bush doctrine. It wasn't that he went after those who attacked; it was that he went after those who didn't” (The New York Times 2008a). Obama acknowledged that this further led to a sharp rise in anti-American sentiments, a notion validated for example by the Pew Center's world public opinion poll (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2008). Nonetheless, the Illinois Senator was convinced that it was still possible to alter course and succeed in Afghanistan “[...] if we act quickly, judiciously, and decisively” (Obama 2007a, 10).

In comparison to his Republican contender John McCain, Barack Obama's plans concerning Afghanistan appeared more substantiated and were spelled out in more detail. A four-pronged approach could be identified in Obama's statements. First of all, he went along the same lines as John McCain in calling for a rise in troop numbers: “[...] I would send two to three additional brigades to Afghanistan. [...] we have four times the number of troops in Iraq, where nobody had anything to do with 9/11 before we went in, where, in fact, there was no Al Qaida before we went in [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). But Obama did not leave it at that. His second focus lay on strengthening and rebuilding a failed state (Obama 2007a, 12). He promised to promote development programs specifically targeting aid to rural and border areas. These were going to help diminish growing Taliban influence, who should be further isolated through *sustained diplomacy* within Afghanistan but also with its neighbors (ibid., 10). Therefore he wanted “[...] to press the Afghan government to make certain that they are actually working for their people” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). The Democratic nominee resolutely told Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai that he wanted to use a Western state's leverage on a developing country: “You are going to have to do better by your people in order for us to gain the popular support that's necessary” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c). Winning the hearts and minds of Afghans seems to be a major driving force to strengthen the U.S. mission in this failed state. Another focal point of Obama's strategy lay on economic aspects. Like his running mate Joe Biden, he was aware of the sharp increase in Afghanistan's production of poppy and subsequent export of opium (ibid.). In 2008, 90% of this drug's worldwide production stemmed from Afghanistan, “[...] despite a \$1 billion Western investment aimed at eradicating drug supplies at their source” (Bremmer 2008, 34). As there are two sides to every coin, poppy cultivation provides for the livelihood of large parts of the Afghan population. But at the same

time, it is a cause for further destabilization as it also funds militant Islamic groups (ibid.). A narrowly defined eradication-only course of action would therefore prove counterproductive as it would further deteriorate living conditions for poppy farmers. Finally, Obama's last proposition was enhanced diplomacy with both Afghanistan and Pakistan. He wanted to encourage dialogue between the two neighbors with the intention of securing their porous border region (Obama 2007a, 10).

Barack Obama seemed to present a comprehensive strategy for dealing with a failed Afghan state. His analysis of the problems the country is facing was sound but not exhaustive. It failed to recognize internal Afghan turmoil between conflictive factions. Nonetheless, his proposition of development aid and programs for Afghanistan constituted an improvement of measures undertaken by the Bush administration. However, financial and diplomatic coercion rather than true partnership or, at least, cooperation between the two countries still was at the heart of Obama's plans. Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin asked President Hamid Karzai what he believed his country needed whereas Barack Obama told the same man what he needed to do for the United States to be successful. While the Democratic presidential nominee's intentions and plans left a positive impression, surprisingly his *diplomatic* approach was prone to criticism. Like his contenders, Obama emphasized state building but failed to additionally focus on nation building.

6.2.4. Joe Biden

On the topic of Afghanistan, Democratic vice presidential nominee Joe Biden advanced the same views as Barack Obama. Biden believed that Afghanistan (as well as Pakistan) and not Iraq was the central front in the war on terror (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b). If it wasn't for U.S. involvement in Iraq and the resources that war costs, the Delaware Senator believed that the United States "[...] could fundamentally change the dynamic in Afghanistan" (MSNBC 2007c, 3). He joined the criticism of the Bush administration's foreign policy: "In six years, we have spent on Afghanistan's reconstruction only what we spend every three weeks on military operations in Iraq" (Biden 2008a).

Senator Biden also offered a wide range of approaches for tackling several problems in Afghanistan: “[W]e need more troops. We need government-building. We need to spend more money on the infrastructure in Afghanistan” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b).

On the topic of U.S. military involvement in the failed state, Biden believed in a *strategic surge*, which would provide only a certain number of more troops which, however, would fulfill specialized tasks. “[...] Special Operations Forces, more civil affairs and intelligence specialists, more Foreign Area Officers” would not only carry out military operations but also assist in “[...] building up the security resources of the Afghan government” (Biden 2008b). Biden offered a long-term perspective of reducing U.S. involvement in Afghanistan: “We need to train the Afghan National Army so that it can take on the missions now performed by U.S. troops. We’ve got to train the Afghan police, so that they can bring security to every village.” Furthermore, “[w]e’ve got to root out corruption in these forces, professionalize them, and pay the soldiers and policemen decent wages” (ibid.).

Government- and state-building constituted another central part of Joe Biden’s approach to Afghanistan based on development aid, as would be reconstruction of infrastructure. The Delaware Senator was in favor of the Bush administration’s proposal of an appropriation of \$10.2 billion in aid for Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this sum could only serve as a starting point for Biden, who hoped for “[...] a genuine increase in development aid [...]” (Biden 2008c) which truly reached the Afghan people who needed improvements instead of being diverted to contractors or being lost to corruption. In general, he believed that

We need more money for reconstruction in Afghanistan: We spend about \$1.5 billion per year, which on a per capita basis is far, far less than we’ve spent on reconstruction efforts in the Balkans and East Timor, or just about any other post-conflict zone. We need more funds, but we also need to use our funds better. We need a Special Investigator-General for Afghan Reconstruction. The Afghans are patient people, but they’re not seeing an effort worthy of a superpower. (Biden 2008b)

Furthermore, Joe Biden was also aware of the negative implications of the steeply rising drug production in Afghanistan. “The Taliban were able to bring drug production nearly to a halt by the end of their reign—there’s no excuse for a superpower failing so markedly in the same effort” (ibid.), the Senator bewailed. Instead he wanted to provide alternative ways for farmers to earn their livelihood. In order to do so it would be necessary to counter corruption in Afghanistan. In addition, Biden did not want to use aerial eradication of

poppy cultivations as a first step, but instead proposed “[...] targeting the multimillionaire drug kingpins who are helping fund the Taliban” (ibid.) as a starting point.

Joe Biden’s plans for Afghanistan were very similar to Barack Obama’s, but the Senior Senator from Delaware provided more in depth information on how he would carry out his approaches. His additional recommendations concerning diplomatic efforts and the inclusion of Afghanistan’s neighbors in a comprehensive roadmap towards a positive development will be discussed in the chapter on Pakistan.

6.3. Iraq

Hardly any issue in the 21st century’s first decade received more attention worldwide and was discussed more controversially than the war in Iraq (also called the Third Gulf War). It is still one of the most captivating events for U.S. foreign policy.

In the wake of the attacks on the world trade center in New York on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent U.N. backed war in Afghanistan striving to ouster the Taliban regime from power, another battleground for the U.S. led War on Terror was pushed forward.

Based on flawed intelligence claiming that Saddam Hussein had obtained weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence 2008), the Bush administration, particularly Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld propagated for a military intervention. In his presentation to the UN Security Council then-Secretary of State Colin Powell urged for immediate action. Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix contradicted U.S. claims and no resolution approving a war against Iraq was passed. Notwithstanding international protests, Bush formed a *coalition of the willing*, prominently featuring the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland, set an ultimatum for Iraq and consequently invaded the country on March 20, 2003, thereby breaching the UN Charta. In the following weeks and months Saddam Hussein and, as a media event, his statue were toppled, several cities *liberated* from Ba’athists and the whole country occupied by coalition forces (Woodward 2006) (Haass 2009). Worldwide public outrage against the war led to some of the largest protests in history and was further stirred by disturbing images showing torture of Iraqi detainees perpetrated by U.S. soldiers in the prison of Abu Ghraib and other locations (Suskind 2008).

However, discussions about tactics, insurgents and counter-insurgency soon eclipsed the debate about legitimacy and motifs³⁵ in the U.S..

There is no need to meticulously detail the complete chain of events, *in lieu* thereof Michael Oren gives a comprehensive roundup of the U.S. war on terror, especially the war in Iraq:

With the crumbling of the Twin Towers [...] came the breakdown of romantic illusions and the collapse of American restraint. Kabul fell to U.S. forces, followed by Baghdad, Faluja, and Tikrit. But the heat of America's victory over the fundamentalist Taliban and the secular Ba'ath seemingly welded the religious and nationalist elements in Iraq into an implacably galvanized insurgency. The United States fulfilled its centuries-long urge to instill American-style democracy in the Middle East, but with it came rapid dissolution. Initially mauled by Sunni and Shi'ite militiamen determined to drive them from the country, U.S. troops were soon trapped in the cross fires between Sunni and Shi'ite partisans aiming to kill one another. (Oren 2007, 602)

When giving his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee³⁶ (SFRC), renowned scholar and former foreign policy advisor to President Carter Zbigniew Brzezinski came to the conclusion that “[t]he war in Iraq is a historic, strategic, and moral calamity”. He further deplored that it was “[u]ndertaken under false assumptions, it is undermining America's global legitimacy. Its collateral civilian casualties as well as some abuses are tarnishing America's moral credentials. [...] [I]t is intensifying regional instability” (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2007, 1).

All of the Middle Eastern countries discussed in this paper have a stake in the outcome of the Iraq war. Interrelations are widespread on a complexity of issues. Especially Iran, Iraq's long-time nemesis, is actively seeking influence in the war-torn country. Not only does the Shi'a theocracy hold strong ties to several political parties in Iraq, it also provides extensive training for militia groups and supplies them with weapons (Felter/Fishman 2008, 83-84).

Besides posing problems amass for the next U.S. administration on a strategic level, Iraq, together with Afghanistan, is the front runner for nation building efforts. “[T]he war has

³⁵ For a detailed report of the Bush administration's internal workings, factions and formation of its policies concerning the Iraq war in the years 2006 to 2008 see Bob Woodward's *The War Within* (2008).

³⁶ The SFRC was at that time chaired by Joe Biden.

essentially ruined the country's economy, society, and sovereignty" instead of bringing the promised democracy, is Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz's conclusion (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008, 132).

Despite a remarkable budgetary surplus due to its oil revenues Iraq ranks among typical developing countries. Because of the war it was not awarded an HDI value in 2005 but the deterioration of living conditions has been recognized by the UNDP (2008b). Life expectancy at birth is 57.7 years and only 2.8% of the population is aged 65 or older. In addition, Iraq's under-five mortality rate is 125 (per 1000 live births) which means that an eighth of children born die before their fifth birthday. Over a quarter of the population is illiterate despite an enrolment rate in primary education of 88%. The same amount of people is unemployed. High discrepancies between men and women can be detected. While women in general live 2 years longer than men only 64.2% are literate. Moreover, they receive only one eighth of the income an average Iraqi man will earn.

Furthermore, the war has led to a large scale humanitarian crisis. Between 16% and 17% of nearly 29 million Iraqis have become refugees. The majority remained in the country where they are internally displaced (roughly 2.8 million), but almost 2 million people also fled their homeland, finding refuge mostly in Syria as well as in Jordan, the Gulf States, Iran, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey³⁷ (UNHCR 2009). Today, Iraq has hence become the country with the highest number of refugees living in neighboring countries (Khanna 2008, 410, note 7). These UNHCR numbers do not even include those refugees who became asylum seekers in Europe, the United States or other industrialized nations of the West. Besides the obvious humanitarian consequences of displacement concerning the safety and security of individuals, health and especially mental health as well as large scale brain drain are issues that will have to be addressed if not by the international community then, at least, by the al-Maliki-government.

Thankfully, the dimensions and tragedy of the situation stopped cynics short of calling the billions and quite possibly trillions³⁸ of USD spent on the war development aid.

³⁷ Order according to number of refugees harbored, ranking from highest (Syria with 1.2 million) to lowest (Turkey, 7.000).

³⁸ Joseph Stiglitz calls to acknowledge the whole range of costs the Iraq war has brought upon the U.S.. His calculations amount to three trillion U.S. dollars of total costs (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008).

The question remains if “[...] Iraq, even after decades of American sacrifice, [will] ever cohere as a peaceful, democratic nation” (Oren 2007, 612). Considering the scale of ongoing civil unrest and basically civil war between rivaling ethnicities, clans and religious denominations, disintegration followed by the emergence of smaller entities like Kurdistan are within the range of probability. For Khanna this possibility is already taking shape, and will finally result not only in an independent Kurdish nation but also a “[...] Shi’astan, and Sunnistan [...]” (Khanna 2008, 221). That Iraq has become the next failed state in a long line of collapsed Third World countries is being acknowledged by liberal and conservative thinkers alike.

“A falsely justified and poorly waged war hardly deserves the excuse of good intentions. Iraq was a folly and a failure of the kind that happens once every few generations and leaves consequences for generations to come” George Packer mused in *World Affairs* (Packer 2008, 23). How will the next U.S. president deal with these consequences? What conclusions will he draw and will he be wiser for the experience?

Despite the formidable data available, the following analysis will not focus on McCain’s and Obama’s military proposals concerning Iraq, but look beyond mere troop numbers and try to get to the bottom of their developmental approach of capacitating a (nearly) failed Third World country. The need for such a strategy is great, “[i]t is time for U.S. policy makers to look toward postoccupation Iraq. [...] Washington must begin to develop plans to manage the risks that will come with Iraq’s likely fragmentation [...] by repairing damaged ties with Saudi Arabia and other traditional Arab allies” (Bremmer 2008, 33).

6.3.1. John McCain – A Hundred Years in Iraq, the Central Front Against Al Qaeda

John McCain’s early and lasting criticism of the way the Bush administration conducted the war in Iraq was one of the thriving points of his campaign. Not only did it help draw a sharp line between the two politicians – the incumbent President and the presidential nominee of the same party – but it strengthened the view of McCain as a maverick who stands by his word and possesses foresight (Woodward 2008, 344-345). At the same time, it also made it very clear that he was one of the staunchest proponents of the war in Iraq. Even with prior knowledge of the non-existence of WMDs he might have opted for the

war because “Saddam still posed a threat that was best to address sooner rather than later” (McCain and Salter 2008b, 7). Additionally, for McCain it was worth it because if the U.S. persevered, Iraq would become “[...] a stable ally in the region and a fledgling democracy” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a) leading to peace and success in the Middle East in general (The New York Times 2008b).

In every televised debate he therefore reiterated his mantra of *the surge*: McCain had called for a raise of troop levels from the beginning of the war (Vries 2004), believed that the war was “[...] terribly mismanaged [...]” (MSNBC 2007d), and was glad the Bush administration had finally acted upon his (and several others in the intelligence community’s) recommendation (MSNBC 2007a); he deemed General Petraeus the right person for the job as commanding general of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq, and felt confirmed that the surge was succeeding (CFR 2007e).

Downright every mass media debate, interview, and article discussing the Iraq war in connection to the presidential election focused nearly exclusively on two aspects: first, the question whether the war was justified in the first place and second, if and how the U.S. could win the war. Later, *the surge* became the dominating topic, drowning out most aspects not related to it. As mentioned before, John McCain proved no exception to this. In his belief in the *great strategy* he appealed for support for the U.S. counterinsurgency tactic in order to win the war and bring the troops “[...] home with victory and honor [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). To his credit, his strategy for Iraq proposed in his campaign materials went far beyond mere military considerations. This will be analyzed below, but judging by how little these assessments and propositions found their way into the public debates their relevance should not be overestimated. Nonetheless, they prove a valuable source to gather insight on the Senator’s policy recommendations for dealing with a failed state.

Looking at the military component of proceedings in Iraq, McCain resolutely argued that a timetable for withdrawal or even a discussion about a potential withdrawal would constitute surrender (MSNBC 2008a). In his opinion an open-ended commitment would be acceptable. This comment raised eyebrows but was mostly cited out of context. At a town hall meeting in Derry, New Hampshire, the Arizona Senator delivered the following sound bite: “[Question:] President Bush has talked about our staying in Iraq for fifty years. McCain [interrupting]: Make it a hundred.” (Hertzberg 2008). In the ensuing dis-

cussion he further explained that this kind of commitment would not mean open battle but rather go along the lines of U.S. military bases comparable to those in Germany, South Korea, and other parts of the world (ibid.). By taking this stance, McCain can be interpreted as adhering to the so-called *Pottery Barn rule*: you break it, you own it. Coined by either Colin Powell or New York Times columnist Tom Friedman, it refers to the liability the U.S. incurred by starting the Iraq war (Safire 2004).

McCain had no illusions regarding the presence of al Qaeda in Iraq and believed the country to be *the central front* against the terrorist organization (MSNBC 2007e, 1). The continuation of the fight was henceforth in the U.S.' own interest and did not only serve Iraqi national security. Defeat in Iraq would not only empower al Qaeda, but also result in chaos and genocide in the region, in which case McCain was convinced "they'll [al Qaeda] follow us home" (CNN 2007a), a point of view shared by hardly any member of the U.S. national security apparatus. The third published Terrorism Index, a regular survey among foreign policy experts conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in cooperation with the Center for American Progress, arrived at the conclusion that such a correlation was highly unlikely (Anonymous b 2007, 66). By contrast, McCain's perception that failure in Iraq would augment Iranian influence and amplify sectarian violence were widely accepted (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a).

Coming back to McCain's vision on rebuilding Iraq on a non-military scale: Despite the high levels of violence in the country, the Republican nominee saw social and economic progress taking root. One of his favorite examples was the election law Iraq passed in September 2008 (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). He considered this an improvement to the state building efforts undertaken by the al-Maliki-government. Earlier McCain had criticized its progress on reaching set benchmarks (the passing of several laws, e.g. the election law) (CFR 2007a), and asked that it take its responsibilities more seriously. Nonetheless, the United Nations alongside the U.S. should play a more vital "[...] role in supporting the elections [...]" (McCain 2008d). At the same time, he apprehended that elections alone did not constitute democracy but that there was a necessity for "[...] rule of law [...] which will then allow true democracy to take place" (CFR 2007c). Therefore, the Iraqi government had to be enabled "[...] to show the necessary leadership to [...] develop their country" (McCain 2008d) through U.S. pressure on Iraqi politicians. The U.S. would "[p]ush for political reconciliation and good government [...] [and help] [...] get Iraq's economy back on its feet" (ibid.). Investment in infrastructure and the res-

toration and delivery of basic services, such as electricity, fresh water and security, by the Iraqi authorities would lead to less unemployment providing new perspectives for the population. At the same time microfinance programs should be implemented by the international community to help re-start the private sector which, in turn, would be *the* driving force for growth. Above all, McCain saw the latter as the main source for development which would ultimately “[...] end reliance on outside aid” (ibid.).

John McCain’s vision for developing Iraq encompassed both idealistic and economic approaches. On the one hand, he asserted that “[i]t is strategically and morally essential for the United States to support Iraq in becoming capable of governing itself and safeguarding its people” (McCain Palin 2008 2008a), thereby advocating good governance. On the other hand, he was strongly focused on rebuilding economic capacities mainly by relying on the private sector, not public authority. This, of course, was coherent with the Republican ideology of limited government and promotion of free trade and free economy (Republican Platform 2008 2008, 23-30). In his own words, “[t]he best way to secure long-term peace and security is to establish a stable, prosperous, and democratic state in Iraq” (McCain 2008d) by adhering to the neoconservative paradigm of democratization.

6.3.2. Sarah Palin

Iraq was Sarah Palin’s most commonly addressed foreign policy topic in the election campaign. Nevertheless, in the few months she spent publicly visible on the campaign trail most of her statements were recurring issues. The Alaska Governor fully supported the war in Iraq as well as *the surge* and counterinsurgency strategies. Troop withdrawal for her would be waving “[...] a white flag of surrender [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b). This was unacceptable to Palin who interpreted Iraq as the “[...] central front on the War on Terror” (FOX News 2008) and affirmed John McCain’s view that “[...] victory [was] in sight [...]” (ABC News 2008).

Sarah Palin considered the war being fought also an American war, because U.S. troops in Iraq were preventing terrorist attacks on the United States. At the same time she shared the Republican presidential nominee’s values and ideals that fighting terrorism was “[...] not just to keep the people safe, but to be able to usher in democratic values and ideals around [...] the world” (Couric 2008). Fusing the spread of democracy with the fight against terrorism was one of the four preeminent parts of the Bush doctrine which per-

ceived the promotion of democracy as a key to securing long-term peace and stability (The White House 2002, 22).

Several objections need to be made; first and foremost democratic elections do not automatically deliver the desired results of removing extremist or even terrorist groups from power. Hamas' victory in the February 2006 election of the Palestinian Authority clearly demonstrated this. Elections, of course, are but one aspect of democracy. Nonetheless, "[i]t is highly unlikely that democratically elected Arab governments would be as cooperative with the United States as the current authoritarian regimes" (Gause 2005, 66). Furthermore, there was a visible gap between rhetoric and reality of the Bush administration's policies. "While the United States hopes to replace hostile dictatorships with democracies, only rarely does it push for democracy when doing so could destabilize friendly regimes", Robert Jervis (Jervis 2005, 369), a former president of the American Political Science Association who is very critical of the Bush doctrine, concludes.

Therefore, Sarah Palin's narrow focus could only have been one part of a wider solution if it was to be successful. However, it also underlined her neoconservative approach to foreign policy.

6.3.3. Barack Obama - What I Am Opposed To Is a Dumb War

In 2002, at a time when Barack Obama had already made the decision to run for the U.S. Senate, he gave a speech at a Chicago anti-war rally that would propel him to higher levels of popularity quickly. Despite strongly growing public support for President Bush's decision to go to war with Iraq and dispose of Saddam Hussein, the then-Illinois State Senator acted against advice from his aides. Speaking before two thousand protestors he declared, that he did not oppose war in general but what he opposed was a "[...] dumb war [...]" (Obama 2006c, 294). He believed that Saddam Hussein did not pose an imminent threat to the U.S. and could be dealt with in better ways by relying on a strong international community. Furthermore, he proved foresight when saying:

I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a US occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of Al Qaeda. (Obama 2002)

Six years later Obama still held firm to these beliefs even if he showed less vision but more *statesmanship* and political realism by not repeating his criticism of “[...] so- called allies in the Middle East” (ibid.) such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt which do not uphold certain democratic values.

His early opposition to the Iraq war served as a prominent distinguishing feature between him and his Democratic contenders in the primaries as well as against John McCain. He believed that there was no *military solution* but that the problems in Iraq had to be handled by a *political solution* (MSNBC 2007b): “[A]ll the troops in the world won’t be able to force Shia, Sunni, and Kurd to sit down at a table, resolve their differences, and forge a lasting peace” (Obama 2006b).

Obama’s central line of argumentation from the beginning was that the war in Iraq constituted a divergence from the real focal point of defeating al Qaeda not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan (CFR 2007d). Therefore, he urged for a redeployment of U.S. forces. Additionally, resources should be “[...] spent hunting down bin Laden [...]” under a new strategy refocusing the “[...] attention on building the networks and alliances that are required to reduce terrorism around the world” (Las Vegas Sun 2008).

The question of withdrawal from Iraq led to heated debates during the election campaign especially between Barack Obama and John McCain who held antithetic positions on this issue. While the latter proposed the establishment of permanent U.S. military bases in the war-torn country (see above) the former fully opposed that idea (USA Today 2007) and wanted “[...] troops in the region, outside of Iraq, that can help on counterterrorism activities [...]” (CFR 2007d) instead. Complete withdrawal of all troops with some limited numbers of residual forces within 16 months was Obama’s preferred buzzword (Obama 08 2008, 51).

Apart from military issues the Obama campaign voiced few perspectives concerning the development of Iraq. Interestingly, criticism of the al-Maliki government was similar to the one brought forward by McCain. Looking into Obama’s campaign materials his plan for a post-war Iraq proved to be more detailed though, addressing more issues than the McCain-Palin assessment.

Obama's criticism centered around the perception that the Iraqi government was falling short on delivering promised progress. To him it was necessary that the responsibility lay with the Iraqi people who should form a government "[...] that recognizes the importance of all parties being involved and, most importantly, makes certain that the government apparatus, the security apparatus, is in the hands of non-sectarians, [otherwise] we are not going to be able to impose order [...] in that country" (CBS News' Face the Nation 2006, 3). The Illinois Senator was convinced that it was not in the hands of the United States but in those of the Iraqi leaders to "[...] bring real peace and stability to their country" (Obama 2007a, 4). Although the rhetoric might have differed, John McCain's and Barack Obama's approaches contained similar content to a certain degree. Both presidential nominees believed in building Iraqi capacities to foster direct Iraqi responsibility and accountability. Like McCain, Obama called for benchmarks to organize and evaluate this process and criticized failure to meet them. Especially the lack of investment of Iraqi oil revenues "[...] in rebuilding their own country [...]" (Obama 2008a) angered him. It was clear that the Democratic Senator held firm in his conviction that this should have never been and, therefore, should not continue to be a U.S. war. He recognized the U.S.' role in the ouster of Saddam Hussein and the destruction caused by war and acknowledged the responsibilities that came with it. But at the same time he pressed for Iraqi direct responsibility. On the one hand, this can be interpreted as a profound understanding that developing countries cannot be treated as puppets on a string but are accountable for their own actions. On the other hand, this notion rejected larger U.S. stake in future Iraqi problems, brought about to some extent by the U.S. intervention. "[W]e're not going to babysit a civil war", Obama clarified his position (Sweet 2007).

But at the same time he demonstrated a broader perspective, proposing *regional diplomacy*, a strategy to reach beyond Iraq and include U.S. enemies like Syria and Iran in the reconstruction-efforts (The New York Times 2007b).

In addition, he addressed the humanitarian crisis of refugees and IDPs (internally displaced person), promising to "commit \$2 billion to a new international effort to support Iraq's refugees" (Obama 2008a). Furthermore, "Obama and Biden will also work with Iraqi authorities and the international community to hold the perpetrators of potential war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide accountable. They will reserve the right to intervene militarily, with our international partners, to suppress potential genocidal violence within Iraq" (Obama 2008c).

Once again, Barack Obama promoted the full panoply of means – use of force, diplomacy, development aid and assistance – to address a multidimensional problem, making use of different schools of thought and their assessments and instruments.

6.3.4. Joe Biden

On the issue of the Iraq war the four candidates discussed held very different points of view. While Sarah Palin and John McCain were pointedly on the same page, Joe Biden and Barack Obama must have had some difficulties merging their positions to the common denominator of a joint ticket.

Joe Biden was maybe the only candidate with a detailed plan for proceedings with Iraq from the beginning of the campaign (MSNBC 2007b). Although he initially supported George W. Bush's plan in 2002, he drastically changed his opinion becoming a strong opponent of the war. He often used the same phrasing as Obama: "[...] there's no military solution, only a political solution" (CFR 2007f), believing that rising sectarian violence would lead to civil war which in turn could destabilize the whole Middle East as a violent confrontation between Shi'ites and Sunnis would draw other countries in, thereby breeding regional unrest. In his assessment of the situation, Biden was relying heavily on the experience of former Yugoslavia falling apart during several wars. He had been a fierce advocate of U.S. intervention in Bosnia and called for airstrikes despite U.N. disapproval (Biden 2008d, 276, 284-289). Drawing on the Dayton Accords, the basis of a settlement in Bosnia, Biden came to analogous conclusions regarding Iraq (Iowa Public Television 2007). Together with Leslie Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Delaware Senator presented a comprehensive plan for a federalized Iraq. This plan was "[...] consistent with the Iraqi constitution" (MoveOn.org 2007) and rested on five pillars:

[First, t]o maintain a unified Iraq, you have to decentralize it. You have to give the courage to the Sunnis and Shias, control over the fabric of their daily lives, control over the local police forces, rules relating to marriage and divorce and education... all the things they're killing each other over.

Secondly, you have to have a limited central government that has concern for its borders, its army, the distribution of oil revenues, its foreign policy.

Thirdly, you have to secure access to oil revenues for the Sunnis who literally have nothing. Oil should be what binds the country together, not what splits it apart. There should be a guarantee in the constitution for proportional share of oil to get the Sunnis to get out of the business of supporting the insurgency.

Fourth, you have to increase reconstruction assistance for Iraq but you have to raise that money from the oil-rich Gulf states who are floating in a sea of oil money, and tie that reconstruction to the protection of the minority ranks.

And lastly, you have to make Iraq the world's problems [and] call [...] the permanent five of the Security Council along with Germany and the four largest Muslim nations in the world to [...] an international conference on Iraq [to find] a political solution [...] based on a federal system of giving local control in order to maintain a unified Iraq. (MoveOn.org 2007)

With this plan, Biden and Gelb tried to tackle all the main problems at once. Although Biden proved to have no problem with U.S. unilateralist action in the Bosnia war (see above), he is a firm believer in multilateralism where possible. By recognizing historical fault lines he anticipated the analysis that “[l]ines drawn in the sand by Western strategist [sic!] redrawing the Iraqi map, and at the same time ignoring Iraq's complex history, have the potential of doing more harm than good” (Jackson 2007, 36).

While Biden's plan garnered some support in the foreign policy community it was also met with criticism. Especially the Iraq Study Group³⁹ Report disapproved of an Iraqi “[...] devolution to three regions [...]” (The Iraq Study Group 2006, 39) as too costly in humanitarian terms. The high level of commingling between Sunnis, Shi'ites and Kurds throughout Iraq “[...] could result in mass population movements, collapse of the Iraqi security forces, strengthening of militias, ethnic cleansing, destabilization of neighboring states, or attempts by neighboring states to dominate Iraqi regions” (ibid., 39). Biden countered this argument by stating that *sectarian cleansing* was already taking place in Iraq. To prevent this from happening again in a federalized country, there would be “[...] both multisectarian and international police protection” (Biden/Gelb 2006). In the end, despite all good intentions such a plan could backfire and leave Iraq dominated by an *imperial power*, as Biden feared himself (Ridgeway 2007, 183). Nonetheless, his vision was shared even by political realists. “A stable Iraq would probably look more like Bosnia or Kosovo than Japan or Germany” (Biddle 2008, 35), Steven Biddle, a CFR senior fellow, mused. This, in his opinion, would “[...] not produce a strong, internally unified, Jeffersonian democracy that spreads liberty through the Middle East while standing in alliance with America against extremism and hegemonic threats in the region” (ibid.). Although it seemed counterintuitive, the electorate could support such an outcome. Pew Center polls showed that “[...] support for democracy that could lead to unfriendly governments [...]”

³⁹ Both Biden and Gelb were members of the group, as was John McCain.

is acceptable to half of the U.S. public (World Public Opinion 2006). Although a federal Iraq would certainly have flaws, it could “[...] stop the fighting, save the lives of untold thousands of innocent Iraqis [...], and secure America’s remaining vital strategic interest in this conflict: that it not spread to engulf the entire Middle East” (Biddle 2008, 35).

As vice presidential nominee Joe Biden no longer promoted his plans for Iraqi federalism as aggressively, but adopted many of Barack Obama’s propositions for a multidimensional approach while enhancing the profoundness of Obama’s plans.

6.4. Pakistan

While Pakistan is not traditionally seen as an integral part of the Middle East, the definition of that region lies in the eye of the beholder. For the Bush administration it has become part of a *broader Middle East* (Gresh 2007). Pakistan’s proximity to and involvement in Afghanistan has important ramifications for the whole region. In addition, growing unrest in the province of Baluchistan with its fragile border to Iran poses another potential threat. These circumstances were acknowledged by the presidential candidates in the 2008 campaign. In general, “[...] Pakistan is a vital link between South and Central Asia and the broader Middle East [...] as conditions in Afghanistan, India, Iran, and Central Asian countries affect Pakistan, events in Pakistan shape its neighbors” (Wadhams, et al. 2008, 1). Therefore, Pakistan will be dealt with in the context of U.S. development and foreign policy towards the Middle East.

The former British colony came into existence with its independent partition from India in 1947. Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s visions of a country that would be a homeland for all Indian Muslims seemed to have materialized in form of an Islamic Republic. However, Islam as state ideology and binding agent of a diverse multi-ethnic society appeared to dissolve after the founding father’s death (Zingel 2002b, 645-646), leaving no predominant overarching Pakistani identity. Islam is the state religion, with over 95% of the 180 million population being Muslim (United Nations Statistics Division 2009a). Other religious minorities are discriminated against. After Indonesia, Pakistan is the country with the second largest Muslim population in the world. Nonetheless, the question remains, for

which Muslims Pakistan is the rightful homeland as discrimination also affects the country's estimated 15-21% Shi'ites, putting a strain on Pakistani-Iranian relations (Minority Rights Group International 2009).

Furthermore, the country is divided into four major provinces – Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh, and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), as well as three territories – Islamabad Capital Territory, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Azad Kashmir⁴⁰. The corresponding ethnicities speak their own tongues, further segmenting the country although English is widely used as a common language (Ethnologue 2009). As in the previously discussed countries, a high degree of unequal development exists between center and periphery. Rural areas often suffer from limited access to clean water and electricity (Kugelman/Hathaway 2008). As a result of slow public investment in infrastructure “[...] nationwide power load sharing and ‘water shortages’ have become common problems and inter alia pose a hazard to people’s health” (Pervez 2008). “Pakistan's health indicators are among the worst in the world, and communicable diseases remain a serious concern” (USAID 2009a). Another contributing factor is the country’s meager economic performance causing prices for basic goods and food to rise. “Consumer products, clothing, apartment rental fees, cars – everything costs virtually the same as it does in the United States”, Fouad Pervez, a Pakistani journalist criticizes (ibid.). Life expectancy is below 65 years. Almost a quarter of the population is undernourished and 38% of children under 5 years are underweight for their age. Relative poverty is widespread with 73.6% of people having to live below 2\$ a day (UNDP 2008d). Soaring illiteracy – half of the country’s inhabitants cannot read and write (ibid.) – as well as the Pakistani age pyramid - almost 37% are under 15 years old - pose current and future problems (United Nations Statistics Division 2009b). Furthermore, Pakistan has one of the worst GDIs worldwide, ranking 152 out of 156 countries reviewed. All of these factors cumulate in Pakistan’s HDI rank of 136 (UNDP 2008c).

Despite generous contributions of the international donor community, Pakistan’s development is well behind plan. A recent case study on the country’s health and population sector came to the conclusion that not enough emphasize was being put on aid effectiveness. By generating the same results year after year there was no visible “[...] success in social service development programs. The government of Pakistan, donors, contractors,

⁴⁰ This region is claimed by both India and Pakistan inciting a decade-long military dispute.

and NGOs [Non-Governmental Organization] all benefit from this current revolving door arrangement, despite the lack of progress for the people they serve” (Droney 2008).

Albeit being a typical developing country, Pakistan offers a special trait: the role of its military. *Every state has an army; in Pakistan the army has the state*, as the saying goes. The military has its own economic enterprise and many public offices are held by former generals and other army officials⁴¹. The Pakistani army has taken over power several times in history, seizing it from elected leaders whenever they deemed necessary. Under General Zia ul-Haq’s rule from 1977 to 1988, the military supported an Islamization of politics and society (Zingel 2002b, 647). The last military coup d’état happened in 1999 when General Pervez Musharraf ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and declared himself Chief Executive and later President of Pakistan. At the same time he also held the office of Chief of Army Staff. “Musharraf took power in the name of efficiency and anti-corruption, not democracy” (Khanna 2008, 114), and international criticism regarding the oppression of opposition forces, human rights violations and a general institutional decline of freedom in the country has been voiced ever since. The *benign* dictator finally stepped down from power in 2008 following unrest and violence over the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007 which led to a declaration of a state of emergency further worsening the situation. After several postponements “[...] elections were finally conducted on February 18th [2008] with both opposition parties – Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party [PPP] and Pakistan Muslim League, led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif – gaining victory” (Minority Rights Group International 2009). In August 2008 Musharraf was forced to resign as President and was succeeded by Asif Ali Zardari, Bhutto’s widower and new leader of the PPP. Decades of corruption, feudal distribution of power and personalized politics discredited the key political parties. “Pakistan’s multiple internal challenges extend beyond its borders and have a wide-ranging impact on regional and global stability” (Wadhams, et al. 2008, 1).

⁴¹ For comprehensive information on Pakistan’s military and its economic enterprises, see for example Ayesha Siddiqa’s analysis on the topic (Siddiqa 2007).

Foreign Relations with the United States have always been as unstable as Pakistan's domestic affairs have proven to be. Since its creation the U.S. has been shifting allegiances alternately between India and Pakistan. Over the years, "[...] U.S. and Pakistani interests and policies have been at odds almost as often as they have been in phase" (Kux 2001, xviii). U.S. episodic involvement started with the outbreak of the Cold War and the U.S. search for allies to contain the Soviet Union. Especially during the late 1950s, Pakistan was perceived as "[...] America's most allied ally in Asia [...]" (ibid., 51) by President Eisenhower. In the 1980s, it served as a *frontline state* for waging a proxy war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan (ibid., 256-294). And finally in 2001, it became a strategic partner for the U.S. in its *war on terror*. Between these episodes of close relations the U.S. regularly backed away from its ally and moved closer to India. Both India and Pakistan are captives of regional rivalry including a tit-for-tat arms race that produced two nuclear states. Consequently, these shifts in policy have fostered a negative image of the United States. America is seen as an unreliable partner. Disentangling and separating these distinct bilateral relations from each other will be necessary to foster trust and build long-lasting relations between these countries.

A critical aspect of Pakistan's relevance to the U.S. is its immediate vicinity to Afghanistan. As discussed above, Pakistan is a vital ally for the United States in its *global war on terror* as well as for efforts concerning the stabilization of the greater Middle East region. Afghanistan's role in reaching this target is pivotal. "[...] Pakistan aided Afghan factions in the 1970s, formed the rear base for the mujahideen in the 1980s, and was instrumental in the creation of the Taliban in the 1990s [...]" (Khanna 2008, 111), contributing to its current importance. The U.S. expects Pakistan to help stabilize Afghanistan by demonstrating will and capacity to thwart al Qaeda and Taliban in the *tribal areas*. Growing sectarian and ethnic violence in these border regions pose threats to both countries and undermine counterterrorism activities. "[T]he ongoing movement of Islamic militants in the border region [...]" are a cause of worry, "[...] and U.S. officials have issued increasingly strong claims about the problems posed by Taliban insurgents and other militants who are widely believed to enjoy safehaven on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line" (Kronstadt 2008, 23). Along this border on the Pakistani side, Baluchistan, FATA, and the NWFP are all rather unstable regions where secessionist movements have been active since Pakistan's independence. Both, the U.S. and Pakistan, have focused their attention on FATA

and the NWFP. Especially Waziristan, considered the most dangerous part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, is crucial to their strategy. Therefore, “Washington has conducted unilateral missile strikes since soon after its invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. American pilotless surveillance planes have been flying over the restive border with near impunity for much the same time” (Qadri 2008). These actions have damaged efforts to ameliorate and strengthen U.S.-Pakistani relations. “Despite more than \$10 billion in U.S. assistance since September 11, 2001, distrust, dissatisfaction, and unrealistic expectations continue to undermine the official U.S. goal of developing a strong, strategic, and enduring partnership with Pakistan” (Cohen 2007, viii). Out of these funds only ten percent “have been used specifically for development and humanitarian assistance, including the U.S. response to the October 2005 earthquake” (ibid.) in Kashmir which killed almost 80,000 people and caused severe devastation.

How will the next president consolidate these issues? Will he support a (to the U.S.) benign or even malign dictator or democratically elected head of state despite human rights violations and little prospect for an amelioration of the political system as long as he can accomplish certain goals in the *war on terror*? Or will he pressure for the promotion of democracy without regard to the negative impact such an approach could have on U.S.-Pakistani relations in general and U.S. strategic military goals in particular? These extremes open up a broad middle course of action. Where on this spectrum of possibilities are McCain’s and Obama’s proposed policies towards Pakistan situated? Will they be able to balance short-term and long-term goals effectively? And above all, will the U.S. broaden their narrow approach to include development policies as one of the focal points of foreign policy towards Pakistan?

6.4.1. John McCain – A Long-lasting Commitment to an Ally

In John McCain’s opinion, both Afghanistan and Pakistan are equally important challenges to the next U.S. president (McCain 2007b, 20). Pakistan, however, appeared to be a more comfortable topic for the Senator as he brought it up himself several times and elaborated on his propositions more frequently. Several times in debates he defended President Pervez Musharraf without ever mentioning alleged human rights violations or other criticism frequently directed at the former Pakistani leader. On the contrary, he cre-

ditioned the General for restoring order in the “[...] failed state [Pakistan was at the time] [...] when Musharraf came to power”, further stating that “[e]verybody who was around then, and had been there, and knew about it knew that it was a failed state” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a).

Despite his evaluation of Pakistan’s importance, the Arizona Senator frequently repeated the same few propositions when asked. He acknowledged that “[...] our relations with Pakistan are critical, because the border areas are being used as safe havens by the Taliban and Al Qaida and other extremist organizations, and we have to get their support” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c). Therefore, it would be necessary to continue to cooperate with President Musharraf to stop the advancing *Talibanization* of the Pakistani society (McCain 2007b, 20). This notion was disputed by many scholars who believed that there was no imminent “[...] risk of an ‘Islamist revolution’ in Pakistan as a whole for many years to come” (Lieven 2008, 17). But McCain’s proposal that “[t]he United States must help Pakistan resist the forces of extremism by making a long-term commitment to the country” (McCain 2007b, 20) targeted one of the most important points of criticism – the instability of relations between the two countries.

John McCain saw himself fit to find solutions for the problems faced in Pakistan because he knew “[...] how to deal with [it]” (CFR 2008a): “I know Musharraf. Pakistan was off the radar until these things happened. [...] I’ve been to Waziristan. I know these issue [sic!] and I’ve been involved in them for the last 20 years.” (ibid.). On the one hand, this was a continuation of a long line of attacks on his contender Obama’s alleged inexperience. On the other hand, McCain drew attention to the most unstable area within the FATA. Although no proof of McCain’s visit to the area was found, he repeated his claim several times. Albeit this potential *faux pas*, on the issue of Pakistan, the Republican presidential nominee seemed to deviate from his usual routine. Instead of calling for sanctions, enhanced pressure or unilateral military action, he and Obama appeared to switch positions. This time, John McCain wanted to win the heart and minds of the Pakistani population “[...] by working and coordinating our efforts together, not threatening to attack them, but working with them” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c). This proposed cooperation appeared to rely heavily on Pakistan’s own security forces, who were the ones, who should “[...] go into these areas [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a) according to McCain. The Arizona Senator feared, like others, “[...] that

Waziristan – and other tribal regions – could become a staging area for further attacks on the United States if the Pakistani army doesn't root out pro-Taliban forces" (Qadri 2008).

He was willing to use force only where and if necessary. Instead of military action, he suggested adherence to a strategy analogous to the one General Petraeus used in Iraq but adapted to fit the conditions in this very different situation: "And that is to get the support of the people" (ibid.). His goal was to diminish assistance granted to the Taliban and other militant groups by the population. Therefore, coordinated efforts together with the Pakistani leadership would be necessary. John McCain believed that threats of attack would be counterproductive, but at the same time, he did not fully exclude the possibility of U.S. military intervention. To him it was even naïve to suppose that nuclear weapons would never be used in this specific context (CFR 2007c).

However, McCain stated that he was "[...] not prepared at this time to cut off aid to Pakistan" (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). Apart from vague suggestions concerning the above mentioned border regions the Republican nominee did not elaborate any further on his propositions regarding aiding Pakistan. In 2008, USAID Pakistan focused its attention on programs in the health and education sector, providing basic services in both cases. Furthermore, research and assistance in the context of *rule of law* and emergency assistance were vital parts of the agency's projects and programs (USAID 2008). However, none of these reached the most affected Pakistanis, people living in the NWFP and South Waziristan, because no humanitarian access to these areas exists even today (USAID 2009b). John McCain's approach to target aid specifically at these regions and their inhabitants to foster cooperation and weaken militant Islamist groups showed an understanding of Pakistan's problems. His desire to "[...] bring children into schools and out of extremist madrasahs [...]" (McCain 2007b, 20) demonstrated a commitment to humanitarian causes which advance Western ideals and aid American-style modernization efforts. At the same time, Senator McCain offered no explanations on how this could be achieved. In summary, his proposals combined humanitarian, financial and political assistance, e.g. "supporting Pakistani moderates" (ibid.), as means to military goals carried out by Pakistan's security forces.

True to his neoconservative stance, the Republican nominee valued U.S. interests higher than achieving democratization in Pakistan while at the same time promoting the spread of American values by advancing humanitarian causes.

6.4.2. Sarah Palin

For Governor Palin, Pakistan was one of the great threats to the United States. However, in her opinion it was less important than a potentially nuclear Iran (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b). Furthermore, she expressed her trust in the then-newly elected President Asif Ali Zardari, whom she had met during her briefings on international politics with foreign heads of state in New York. In an interview with CBS News, just after this series of meetings, she assured the reporter that she did not believe the Pakistani president wished to protect al Qaeda within the borders of his country. When asked about the high level of unpopularity the U.S. had in Pakistan's population⁴², Palin avoided an answer. Instead, she talked about freedom and democratic values, and a common vision of "[...] rid[ing] not only their country, but the world, of violent Islamic terrorist" (Couric 2008). Apparently this former perception was shared by half of the Pakistani society. According to a 2006 Pew Center poll 50% of Pakistanis believed that democracy could work well in their country (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006).

There was some public confusion about what the McCain-Palin policy would be towards Pakistan. Although both nominees repeatedly reassured the public that they were *on the same page*, statements by Sarah Palin casted shadows of doubt upon this assertion. As discussed above, John McCain was careful not to make any comments on potential military action in Pakistan. On the contrary, he tried to assure that he was seeking non-military solutions to the situation.

Sarah Palin, on the other hand, was not that averse to cross-border attacks into Pakistani territory. In an interview with ABC News she remained non-committal and avoided a clear statement on whether she believed that the United States had a right to conduct this form of attacks and pursue militant groups in Waziristan without the Pakistani government's consent. For her, a military strike would be a last option, but one that was not off the table. In fact, the Alaska Governor believed that "[...] America has to exercise all options in order to stop the terrorists who are hell bent on destroying America and our allies. We have got to have all options out there on the table" (ABC News 2008).

⁴² During President Bush's years in office (2000-2008) on average only 18% to 19% of Pakistan's population held favorable views of the U.S. according to the Pew Global Attitudes Project (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2008).

Once more, Sarah Palin's foreign policy approach emphasizes military engagement. While she mentioned the necessity of democratic values and the spreading thereof, her solutions did not contain any developmental approaches.

6.4.3. Barack Obama – The Central Front on Terrorism

Many analysts believed that Senator Obama's approach to Pakistan was a deviation from his normal focus on diplomacy, non-military actions, and a balancing of methods. Judging by their statements in the presidential debates it appeared that Senators Obama and McCain had taken each other's positions.

Barack Obama saw Pakistan as “[...] the central front on terrorism [...]” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c) and believed that dealing with this threat was a “[...] seminal question [...]” (CFR 2007d) for the United States. Already in 2007, the Democratic nominee characterized Pakistan as a “[...] growing sanctuary [...]” (CFR 2008b) for militant Islamist groups such as al Qaeda. In his opinion, one of the main reasons for this development was a failed U.S. strategy in Iraq (CFR 2008b). This could have led the Pakistani population to perceive the United States as “[...] an occupying force [...]” (CFR 2007a). Therefore, it was necessary to reverse course in order to ameliorate bilateral relations. Subsequently, this would strengthen President Musharraf's position to cooperate with the U.S. (CFR 2007a).

In his 2007 speech at the Wilson Center, *The War We Need to Win*, Senator Obama laid out in detail his plans for a comprehensive anti-terrorism strategy under his presidency. Criticizing the Bush administration's approach, he called for a re-focusing of attention away from Iraq and on to Afghanistan and Pakistan. One of his central messages was directed at the Pakistani leadership: “If we have actionable intelligence about high-value terrorist targets and President Musharraf won't act, we will” (Obama 2007b). Such a proposition of unilateral military action seemed untypical for the outspoken critic of the Iraq war. Obama adhered to his statement at all times during the campaign, reiterating it even in the last televised presidential debate in October 2008:

[We will insist] that they go after these militants. And if we have Osama bin Laden in our sights and the Pakistani government is unable or unwilling to take them out, then I think that we have to act and we will take them out. We will kill bin Laden; we will crush Al Qaida. That has to be our biggest national security priority (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c).

This deviation from his usually perceived routine drew harsh criticism and many comments. Ashley Tellis, a senior associate on Asian strategic issues at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, addressed this directly in a publication on Pakistan. He identified several approaches to Pakistan, one of them having been articulated by several “[...] Democratic presidential hopefuls” (Tellis 2008a, 39). This approach was “[...] unilateral U.S. military action [...]” (ibid.) and Barack Obama one of the people addressed. His scathing criticism of such a strategy came to the conclusion that it

[...] would risk inflaming Pakistani public opinion, especially at the extremist fringes; it would deepen the bitterness within the Pakistani military and intelligence services and strengthen their incentives to assist those terrorist groups that seek to inflict most damage on U.S. interests; and it would embarrass the mass of moderate Pakistanis, both within civil society and in the armed services, who believe that cooperation with the United States represents the solution to both defeating terrorism, however slowly, and rejuvenating Pakistan as a successful state. (ibid., 40)

Others accused Obama of promoting the Bush doctrine in this instance. He met this criticism by stating “[...] that is not the same thing because here we have a situation where al Qaeda, [...] is in the territory of Pakistan. We know that. [...] this is not speculation. This is not a situation where we anticipate a possible threat in the future”, because al Qaeda “[...] killed 3,000 Americans and is currently plotting to do the same” (The New York Times 2008a).

Although there was no doubt that Obama believed in his proposition, critics often did not take the whole picture into account. Apart from this heavily publicized emphasis on military solutions and possible unilateral action, the Illinois Senator, in fact, also advocated development aid and assistance. At a time when Republican presidential nominee John McCain defended President Pervez Musharraf as the person who prevented state failure in Pakistan (see above), Obama rejected this notion: “[...] for 10 years, we coddled Musharraf, we alienated the Pakistani population, because we were anti-democratic. We had a 20th-century mindset that basically said, ‘Well, you know, he may be a dictator, but he’s our dictator.’ And as a consequence, we lost legitimacy in Pakistan” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008a). Already in 2007 Senators Obama and Biden had co-sponsored a resolution to “[...] condemn the decision by President Pervez Musharraf [...] to declare a state of emergency [...], suspend the Constitution [...], dismiss the Supreme Court Justices refusing to take a loyalty oath, and initiate a nation-wide crackdown on political opposition, the media, and the courts [...]” (Kerry 2007).

In addition, Obama criticized that too much of U.S. financial aid to Pakistan “[...] has been in the form of just military aid and not enough of it has been in the form of building schools and building infrastructure in the country to help develop and give opportunity to the Pakistani people” (MSNBC 2008b, 2). Instead, Obama suggested to “[...] work with the Pakistani government [...] to encourage democracy” (The New York Times 2008a). The analysis that such a re-direction of funds could greatly help mitigating Pakistan’s abject poverty was shared by many scholars. Abovementioned Ashley Tellis, for example, suggested to “[...] expand access to [...] health, and community services; increase the investments in infrastructure; and strengthen local public diplomacy, counter-narcotics, and border control management” (Tellis 2008b, 9).

While Obama promised unilateral military actions in case a situation arose in which he deemed them necessary to protect U.S. national security, he also focused on development aid and assistance. His propositions encompassed a comprehensive approach to Pakistan. This aid, however, would not be given out of *mere* humanistic ideals but very likely be conditioned on support in the shared fight against militant Islamist groups. Without Pakistan’s compliance aid could quickly be redirected to other countries or withdrawn altogether.

6.4.4. Joe Biden

Pakistan could be best described as Senator Biden’s hobby horse and passion. It was one of his particular areas of expertise; one he had focused on strongly in debates and speeches. During his tenure in the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee he fostered close relations to Pakistani leaders such as President Musharraf and exiled politician Benazir Bhutto (The New York Times 2007b). His assessment was that “Pakistan is [...] potentially the most dangerous country in the world” (ABC News 2007) because in comparison to Iraq it already possessed nuclear weapons which were capable of striking Israel and the Mediterranean. Furthermore, large parts of al Qaeda resided within Pakistan, making it the host of a *control room* for potential attacks on U.S. homeland. (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b).

Despite this analysis, Biden never believed that U.S. security was more important than “[...] the way a key ally like Musharraf disregards freedom and [...] democracy” (The New York Times 2007b). Instead, he repeatedly called for re-directing the official U.S.

approach and suggested the use of leverage on the then-Pakistani president to abide democratic values. Despite close relations he expressed concern and criticism as to Musharraf and his crackdown on Pakistan's democracy. Therefore, the Delaware Senator wanted the U.S. to "[...] move from a Musharraf policy to a Pakistan policy" (ibid.). Such a new policy approach would shift "[...] its focus from the stability of President Pervez Musharraf to the needs of Pakistan as a whole" (Rogers 2007). Thus, Biden advised to "[...] significantly increase [...] economic aid relative to education, relative to NGOs, relative to all those things that make a difference in the lives of ordinary people over there, and not be doing it through the military side" (The New York Times 2007b). Concretely, he promised to triple the 2007 levels of humanitarian aid for Pakistan should he become president⁴³ (Rogers 2007). "Instead of funding military hardware, it would build schools, clinics, and roads", he further announced (Murray 2007). This earned him respect from scholars who also advocated increased aid to Pakistan (Lieven 2008, 19). Especially his declared focus on education "[...] to compete for those hearts and minds of the people in the region" (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b) was a shared vision of many observers of Pakistani development because "[a]n effective public school system would draw children away from [...] radical madrasas" (Pervez 2008).

Nonetheless, this aid would not be given without reciprocity. However, contrary to Barack Obama, Senator Biden would have based conditionality not on Pakistan's support for U.S. security strategies but on their efforts towards good governance. These could be compensated by a "[...] 'democracy dividend' of \$1 billion, for the first year of democratic rule" (Murray 2007).

6.5. The Arab World

The Middle East, the Greater Middle East, the Orient⁴⁴, the Arab World, the Crescent of Crisis⁴⁵ – all of these terms describe a loosely defined part of the world which has been in

⁴³ This statement was given at a time when Joe Biden was still running for the presidential nomination.

⁴⁴ For a comprehensive analysis concerning the term *Orient* see Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (Said 1994).

⁴⁵ In 2006 the Brookings Institute published an anthology on a U.S.-European strategy for the region discussed here, titled "Crescent of Crisis", which extends from Afghanistan to Pakistan, encompassing Iraq and Iran as well as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, among others. In this book several contributors identify a wide range of problems ranging from religious fundamentalism, terrorism, and

the spotlight of U.S. and European foreign affairs for decades. These terms are laden with different connotation, convey diverse ideas and notions and should all be handled with caution⁴⁶. The conflict-ridden and often war-torn area encompasses varying countries depending on the respective description. For the matter in hand it is not necessary to compile an exhaustive list of the countries involved as candidates' perceptions differ. To round off the previous subchapters on selected Middle Eastern states general policy prescriptions concerning the region will be analyzed in condensed form.

In the eight years of President Bush's administration, especially during his second tenure, U.S. foreign policy was deeply involved in Middle Eastern affairs. At his noteworthy speech at the U.S. Military Academy West Point's graduation ceremony in 2002, the President assured that "America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish. We wish for others only what we wish for ourselves -- safety from violence, the rewards of liberty, and the hope for a better life" (Bush 2002b). Concomitantly, he laid out a new strategy which sounded very differently: "[...] the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act" (ibid.). In his second inaugural address the President proclaimed that is was "[...] the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world" (Bush 2005) thereby affirming his further deviation from a realist approach to a strictly idealistically driven neoconservative foreign policy. Despite his promise "[...] not [to] impose our own style of government on the unwilling [...]" (ibid.) many critics saw the opposite implemented in reality. The goal "[...] to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way" (ibid.) seemed to remain merely rhetorical. At the same time, the actual attempts of Bush's policy to shape other countries' internal affairs failed and proved neoconservatives wrong (Gärtner 2008, 69).

Regime change and *promotion of democracy* were two of the most if not the most infamous buzzwords of the Bush administration's Middle Eastern policies. Ending tyranny and spreading democracy based on American values and ideals has been a major driving force

insufficient democracy to questions concerning the chances for development such as economic circumstances or population growth. (Daalder/Gnesotto/Gordon 2006)

⁴⁶ A thorough discussion and problematization of the terms is not possible in this context. Therefore, the analyzed countries will be referred to as being part of the *Middle East*, reverting to the term used by U.S. administration, politicians and agencies in order to avoid inconsistencies.

for neoconservative thinkers who believe that these are “[...] the best means of eliminating hatred and backwardness in which terrorism thrived” (Oren 2007, 585). Especially the war against Iraq was initiated for preemption and prevention but also strongly marketed as a necessary advancement of democracy. By pursuing a strategy of regime change the Bush administration tried to usher in democracy in the Middle East through the use of sanctions, intimidation and force. But even Republican consultants such as Brent Scowcroft who had held the post of National Security Advisor to both Presidents George H. W. Bush and Gerald Ford came to the conclusion “[...] that you can’t pick up a country, create a democracy, turn around and leave” (Brzezinski/Scowcroft/Ignatius 2008, 101). In addition, “[...] a perceived double standard that promotes democracy for adversaries but seems to turn its back on democracy where it interferes with the tactical struggle against terrorists, as in Pakistan and Central Asia, or where it produces undesired outcomes, such as Hamas’s victory in the Palestinian territories” (Steinberg 2008, 161) breeds further unrest and casts shadows of doubt on Washington’s true intentions.

Democracy is often perceived as a Western concept. Attempts to spread it as a form of ruling and governing are condemned as neo-colonialism. In particular, George W. Bush’s policies can be described as “[...] Americans [...] striving to refashion the Middle East in their own image [...]” (Oren 2007, 586). On the other hand, a Pew Global Attitudes Project poll came to the conclusion that

[...] there is enduring belief in democracy among Muslim publics, which contrasts sharply with the skepticism many Westerners express about whether democracy can take root in the Muslim world. Pluralities or majorities in every Muslim country surveyed say that democracy is not just for the West and can work in their countries. But Western publics are divided - majorities in Germany and Spain say democracy is a Western way of doing things that would not work in most Muslim countries. Most of the French and British, and about half of Americans, say democracy can work in Muslim countries. (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006, 4)

Nonetheless, openly conducted promotion of democracy (not only) in Middle Eastern states can produce undesired backlashes for human rights activists, politicians striving for democracy and those who pursue regime change in their native country. U.S. support makes these people easy targets of anti-Western propaganda and rhetoric leading up to persecution and worse (Lyon 2007). But what is the alternative?

What course will President Bush’s successor set? Will he follow the path laid out relying on unilateral action, interference in internal affairs, and forceful promotion of democracy or will he seek multilateral assistance to peacefully support independent development?

6.5.1. John McCain – The Transcendent Challenge of Good versus Evil

Apart from his propositions of a *League of Democracies*⁴⁷, John McCain had little to say on the promotion of democracy, particularly in the Middle East. His main concern for the region was the “[...] transcendent challenge [...] [of a] struggle against radical Islamic extremism” (CFR 2007c).

This Manichaeian worldview of the *war on terror* being “[...] a fight between good and evil [...]” (McCain 2004) was often conveyed by the Republican presidential nominee in debates and speeches. He believed that this will remain “[...] the greatest challenge of our time [...]” (MSNBC 2007d) for the United States. In the end, the U.S. “[...] must win [...], will win [...], [a]nd will never surrender [...]” (CFR 2007c). “We will be able to have a stable Middle East, where our vital national interests, national security interests are at stake.” (The New York Times 2008b). Such military rhetoric was typical for John McCain’s stance on foreign and development policies. It carried the danger of playing into the hands of extremists validating their conviction of an insurmountable enmity between the U.S. and their Muslim fatherlands (Steinberg 2008, 162).

Nevertheless, John McCain also acknowledged the importance of democracy and human rights in the Middle East. He believed that “[j]ust as the desire for freedom is universal, so must be its promotion” (McCain 2005a). These intentions were further underlined by his involvement with the International Republican Institute (IRI) where he chaired the board of directors. The IRI’s mission is to advance “[...] freedom and democracy worldwide by developing political parties, civic institutions, open elections, good governance and the rule of law” (IRI 2007). In his statements on democracy promotion, the Arizona Senator also stroke critical tones concerning U.S. allies. “For many years we believed that bonds of friendship among governments led to peace, irrespective of their domestic nature, and that a despotic ally was preferable to an unfriendly democracy” (McCain 2005a). Yet, such observations were absent in John McCain’s presidential race. His criticism of *friendly regimes* such as Saudi Arabia or Egypt was not reiterated.

John McCain’s views are best summarized in his own words spoken at the 2005 NATO conference in Munich:

⁴⁷ See chapter 4.2. An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom for detailed information.

We have learned that, where repression rules, the lack of political participation and economic opportunity engenders despair and even extremism. Nowhere is this problem more acute today than in the broader Middle East, and the stagnating status quo there demands attention. The promotion of democracy and freedom are simply inseparable from long-term security in this region, and security in the broader Middle East is fundamentally linked to security elsewhere - includmg [sic!] in Europe and North America. When the security of New York or Madrid or Munich depends in part on the degree of freedom in Riyadh or Baghdad or Cairo, then we must promote democracy, the rule of law, and social modernization just as we promote the sophistication of our weapons and the modernization of our militaries. (ibid.)

In John McCain's point of view, values such as democracy, freedom and human rights were not fundamentally values by themselves, at least not such values that required urgent assistance; their importance was conditional upon U.S. interests and security. Nonetheless, "[...] open and tolerant societies [...]" (McCain 2007b, 21) in the Middle East would be paramount to reducing extremism and the Republican presidential nominee was willing to aid in their establishment – particularly through free trade. His prevalent task as president, however, would be "[...] to keep America free, safe, and strong – an abiding beacon of freedom and hope to the world" (McCain Palin 2008 2008a). Promoting democracy in foreign countries would therefore have to "[...] ensure that the United States remains the world's leader in standing for freedom and human rights" (McCain Palin 2008 2008b), a central paradigm of neoconservative thought.

6.5.2. Sarah Palin

The Alaska Governor offered little information concerning her opinions on the topic of democracy promotion and general U.S. policies towards the Middle East. In hardly any interview she touched on these issues.

Sarah Palin was asked about President Bush's deviation from his original promise not to pursue nation building as a foreign policy objective. In fact, he spent more money and time on promoting democracy than his predecessor Bill Clinton had done. In her response, the Republican vice presidential nominee placed a strong emphasize on her own commitment to the spread of democratic values. In the same manner as Senator McCain, Sarah Palin interlinked these efforts with the fight against terrorism. In her conclusions the causality was different however. The Alaska Governor was convinced that the *war on terror* was being fought *inter alia* "[...] not just to keep the people safe, but to be able to usher in democratic values and ideals [...]" (Couric 2008).

6.5.3. Barack Obama – Strengthened Alliances, Diplomacy and Development

Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama made it clear that in his opinion human rights and U.S. national security were not contradictory but complementary concepts (The New York Times 2007b). He believed in promoting democracy not only as a value *per se* but also as a means of ensuring American as well as global security. However, Obama's focus went beyond the proliferation of American ideals.

Several times the Illinois Senator addressed concerns shared by many scholars that U.S. conduct alienated people all over the world. "To build a better, freer world, we must first behave in ways that reflect the decency and aspirations of the American people", he concluded in his 2007 Foreign Affairs article and further specified that "[t]his means ending the practices of shipping away prisoners in the dead of night to be tortured in far-off countries, of detaining thousands without charge or trial, of maintaining a network of secret prisons to jail people beyond the reach of the law" (Obama 2007a, 16). A failure to do so would make the U.S. less safe (The New York Times 2007b). Therefore, it should show a vested interest "[...] in building capable, democratic states that can establish healthy and educated communities, develop markets, and generate wealth" (Obama 2007a, 17). Obama promoted economic development as a driving force of modernization and interlinked it with democracy, just as McCain. Yet, in contrast to his contender, the Democratic nominee offered a broader concept of promoting democracy and reasons for doing so. He was not only or, at least, not primarily concerned with U.S. security but also took health and educational questions of affected developing countries into consideration. "Such states would also have greater institutional capacities to fight terrorism, halt the spread of deadly weapons, and build health-care infrastructures to prevent, detect, and treat deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and avian flu" (ibid.).

Obama sought to promote democracy through strengthened alliances and diplomatic efforts. Therefore, he saw the need to match "[t]he strength of our military [...] with the power of our diplomacy [...]" (CFR 2007a).

Barack Obama and John McCain both cosponsored the ADVANCE Democracy Act of 2005⁴⁸. This legislature would have strengthened “U.S. commitment to promoting democracy around the world. That bill would have established ‘Regional Democracy Hubs’ around the world meant to develop and implement strategies to help bring about democratic transitions in non-democratic countries” (CFR 2008c). However, it did not pass and, therefore, did not become U.S. law.

In his speeches, debate contributions and articles Barack Obama rarely discussed the promotion of democracy with a sole focus on the Middle East but rather took a broader stance addressing development and democracy as common global issues (Obama Biden 2008). Therefore, he promised to seek enhanced international cooperation and advocated diverse methods taken from several schools of thought.

6.5.4. Joe Biden

Surprisingly, the foreign policy pundit Joe Biden provided only little insight into his ideas on democracy promotion in the Middle East. In a speech in 2005, he acknowledged that this issue was often bound to collide with questions of U.S. security (Biden 2005). Nevertheless, he believed that “[...] democracy is our most powerful weapon [...]” (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2006, 1). Senator Biden made his conviction clear that democracy consists of more than the mere holding of elections which may result in outcomes challenging safety rather than securing it⁴⁹. Therefore, he advocated a more comprehensive approach encompassing such variables as institution and capacity building, human rights, education or grassroots governance (ibid., 1-2).

During the last years he was an outspoken proponent of democratizing but federalizing Iraq⁵⁰. Yet, he was opposed to promoting regime change in Iran⁵¹. Senator Obama’s running mate was generally strongly in favor of interventions in conflict zones “[...] in the name of democracy and human rights, a well-intentioned but highly risky stance that has won him devoted support as well as widespread opposition” (Ridgeway 2007, 178). At

⁴⁸ The full version of this bill can be found on GovTrack.us (GovTrack.us 2005).

⁴⁹ In his statement Biden was referring specifically to groups/parties such as Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood or Hezbollah and their growing support.

⁵⁰ For a more detailed account, see chapter 6.3.4 discussing Joe Biden’s plans for Iraq.

⁵¹ For a more detailed account, see chapter 6.1.4 discussing Joe Biden’s plans for Iran.

the same time, however, he was aware of the deterioration of America's image in the world:

[...] the reason why we are disliked so much is because we are trusted so little. [...] I'm talking about the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world who look at us and, when we say and do things [...] conclude that this is a war on Islam. [...] When we went into Afghanistan, the word was, the Arab street would rise up. We did it the right way. The Arab street knew that Arabs, the Muslims in al-Qaeda were bad guys. They supported us. When we do things that don't sound rational to them, it undercuts our legitimacy. (NPR 2007)

While Senator Biden endorsed the promotion of democracy in the Middle East as well as worldwide, he warned of possible negative consequences and wanted to avoid further tarnishing the U.S. image. He focused on stability and security for both the U.S. and those countries it sought to influence.

7. Africa – Leave No Continent Behind⁵²

The continent of Africa faces dozen of challenges if its countries want to *catch up* with Western industrialized nations – the type of modernization development envisioned by the analyzed candidates. First and foremost, poverty needs to be reduced to ease the hardship great portions of the African people face every day of their lives. In 2005, children born in Sub-Saharan Africa would typically not live to the age of fifty. Almost 40% of the adult population in that geographical region is illiterate and only half of the population is enrolled in any form of educational institution. People on average had a GDP per capita of little below 2.000 USD. That makes up not even 6% of high-income OECD country's GDPs per capita. Furthermore, it is important to note that such figures allow for large distortions between the upper and lower quintile of those surveyed. Overall, half of Sub-Saharan Africa lives below the poverty line, surviving on less than 1 USD per day (UNDP 2007, 232).

Poverty reduction will not be possible without alleviating external debts and resolving ongoing conflicts. Of the 35 countries approved for the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) Initiative, 29 are African (IDA/IDF 2008). In 2008, Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 78 conflicts, over 20% of the global total. Three out of twelve highly violent crises in the region even constituted wars. “A zone of interrelated conflicts was distinguishable, constituting an ‘arc of crisis’ ranging from the Gulf of Guinea over central Africa and the Great Lakes region to the Horn of Africa” (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2008).

Furthermore, corruption and other practices hindering *good governance* to evolve need to be resolved (Transparency International 2009). Additionally, combating infectious diseases such as Malaria and HIV/AIDS have to be on the agenda of any solution aiming for a future improvement of the situation. USAIDS estimated that in Sub-Saharan Africa alone almost 12 million children under the age of 18 have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 2008, 13). “Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most heavily affected by

⁵² Following George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Initiative, Thomas Donnelly, a defense and security policy analyst at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, proposed to “Leave No Continent Behind” (Donnelly and Serchuk 2003).

HIV, accounting for 67% of all people living with HIV and for 75% of AIDS deaths in 2007” (ibid., 30).

When discussing such a huge and diverse continent as Africa in such limited space, it is inevitable to make certain generalizations. However, U.S. policies towards the 53 internationally recognized African countries have been uniform and generalized throughout the decades as well. While fostering closer relations with some regimes and condemning others, there has mostly been a *one-size-fits-all* approach to the great plurality of African realities. This approach has been driven by the pursuit of U.S.-interests, especially those concerning U.S. ideology and security.

Strategically, Africa had always played a less significant role for the U.S. than other regions and continents since World War II. Without past colonial involvement, and therefore unsuspected of having regional claims, the U.S. relied on Europe and its colonizing powers to take the lead in African policies. Nonetheless, U.S. – African relations were never untainted. The violence of the slave-trade left a degree of historical animosity that still plays an important role today (Nyang 2005, 913-919). With the historically late wave of independence which swept through Africa from the 1950s onward, the world’s second largest continent reached the American radar. Although it remained a tertiary front behind Europe and Asia, where the U.S. focused their anti-communist activities, U.S. involvement encompassed the whole range of tools available from influencing civil society, for example through radio-broadcasts, to sanctions against benevolent but communist-leaning governments and even to the support of violent but U.S.-friendly regimes (Carson 2004, 1) (Cohen 2008, 18-19). The South-African Apartheid-regime, for instance, was for a long time propped up because the U.S. benefitted from the sound information delivered by the country’s excellent intelligence agencies and U.S. economic interests (Krenn 1998, x).

At the end of the 20th century, the perception was shifting. During President Bill Clinton’s second tenure, a new line of thinking emerged, demanding a commitment and a more proactive approach towards Africa: “In this world, we can be indifferent or we can make a difference. America must choose, when it comes to Africa, to make a difference” (BBC News 2000), he declared a year before leaving office. Especially in the two terms of the Bush administration, Africa gained further prominence in foreign politics although it was

mainly seen through a counter-terrorism lens. The focus fell especially on failed states which were perceived as providing breeding ground for future terrorist and other dangers. Furthermore, specifically Western Africa was perceived as an important factor concerning energy security because of the delivery of resources such as oil. Apart from humanitarian concerns, another dimension taken into consideration was the rising challenge of China and its involvement throughout the continent.

Initiatives such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)⁵³, launched by the Clinton administration, to reduce tariffs, cooperate on development and stipulate economic growth, support for HIPC, focusing debt relief efforts on the poorest, or the Bush administration's efforts such as the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) rewarding *good governance*, or the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)⁵⁴, underscore the change of mind in U.S. foreign and development politics⁵⁵. Furthermore, AFRICOM – the U.S.' Unified Combatant Command for Africa – became operational in October 2008, unifying agendas which had previously been divided among three regional commands. Its mission is to conduct “[...] sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy” (United States Africa Command 2008).

Despite President Bush's displayed commitment to Africa, the continent still remained *left behind*:

The foreign aid funding available to address global poverty, weak and failing states, conflict, and development has actually decreased. Meanwhile, even though aid numbers are higher than ever, the entire U.S. economic assistance budget totaled \$26.9 billion in 2006—or just over two and a half months of spending in Iraq. (Smith/Sullivan/Sweet 2008, 18)

⁵³ For a comprehensive discussion of AGOA see for example Carol B Thompson (2004).

⁵⁴ PEPFAR received particularly negative reviews because of its so-called ABC – abstinence, be faithful, condoms distribution – approach which, among other initiatives was “[...] carefully assessed for the hypocrisies and messianic evangelical Christianity lurking behind them” (Myers 2008, 283). It deprived development programs and projects of funding, if they promoted family planning. See also chapter 7.5.

⁵⁵ Criticism of all of these initiatives is wide-spread and multifaceted and cannot be addressed here due to limitations of space. Regardless of their actual impact and the motivations behind them, they prove a change of direction U.S. foreign policy towards Africa underwent.

John McCain's and Barack Obama's promises and visions for a U.S. Africa policy will be addressed in detail further down. In general, very little information was provided on the two candidates' propositions and plans for that continent. Additionally, the limited number of Senate votes on Africa further impeded research. However, the pronounced lack of interest, especially in John McCain's campaign, painted a clear picture that Africa was no priority for either candidate. In order to substantiate and concretize this vast topic a regional case study proved necessary.

7.1. Case Study Sudan - Darfur

Africa's largest country, which shares borders with nine neighbors, has an estimated population of roughly 42 million people and is one of the fastest growing countries in the world (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division 2009, 5). Its population has a median age of only 20.1 years and people can expect to become 58 years old (ibid., 31,44). However, over a quarter of the population will not survive past the age of forty (UNDP 2008e). Out of 1000 live births almost 70 infants will die within the first weeks of their lives and another 111 children will die before reaching the age of five (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division 2009, 49, 54). "The HDI for Sudan is 0.526, which gives the country a rank of 147th out of 177 countries with data" (UNDP 2008e). Factors such as the high level of illiteracy among adults – almost 40% of the population above the age of 15 cannot read or write -, the 30% of people without access to an improved water source or the over 40% of underweight children are but some of the severe deprivations the Sudanese population faces (ibid.).

Hardly any African country has made as many headlines in the last years as Sudan. Since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1956⁵⁶ the country seemed to be continuously torn by internal conflict and crises. Already two years after achieving sovereignty the first civilian government was overthrown by a military coup d'état. Since 1962, a civil war between the predominantly Christian and animist African tribes of the South and the Muslim Arabs living in the Northern Nile valley arrested the country's development. When in 1972 a peace agreement was finally signed in Addis Ababa, the South of Sudan

⁵⁶ Sudan was among the first independent countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Dagne 2007, 14).

was granted partial self-governance. The government delayed and obstructed the implementation and in 1983 then-President Gaafar an-Nimeiry completely abrogated the treaty and introduced the rules of Sharia as law. Much of South Sudan henceforth rallied around John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its military arm the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) who fought the North ever since. The government was ousted in another coup in 1989 and the National Islamic Front (NIF) which later changed its name to National Congress Party (NCP) came to power with the help of Omar al-Bashir who is still serving as Sudan's President today (Dagne 2007, 14). Civil war was waged for two decades, leaving an estimated 2.5 million people of Southern Sudan's population dead and displacing or forcing to flee another 4.6 million Southerners (Natsios 2008, 80). The hostilities were settled by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the North and South in 2005, providing for security arrangements, political power sharing and the sharing of wealth between the two factions (ibid., 78). "The signing of this agreement effectively ended the [...] civil war and triggered a six-year Interim Period. [In 2011], southerners are to hold a referendum to decide their political future. National, regional, and local elections are to take place [in 2009]" (Dagne 2007, 15).

There are multifaceted reasons for this inter-Sudanese conflict. They have to be sought not only in ethnic and *racial* divisions between Sudan's nearly 600 tribes, but also and foremost in a historic context. The British colonial *divide et impera* rule prepared the ground by promising equal independence and equality to Sudan's South without delivering. Moreover, the Sudanese government has taken an authoritarian approach, holding the country in an iron-fisted grip, neglecting the grievances of its population by introducing Arabic as the national language alongside Sharia law (ibid., 14), or ignoring devastating famines in the South (de Waal 2004) to name but a few examples. In addition, oil-rich Sudan is divided over the distribution of revenues throughout the country. "When you ask people what the war was all about, in the South and now in Darfur and possibly in the East, one word summarizes it all: marginalization—marginalization by the Arab center of the non-Arab periphery" (Jobbins 2008, 13), a speaker at a Sudan Conference observed. Such deep rifts need to be consolidated; nation-building will have to be an issue tackled if the country wants to remain *de iure* or become *de facto* united again. The stark contrast between *Arab* and *African* is largely contested by experts as decades of intermarriage and internal migration have made it difficult to discern between hardly distinct groups. The division between central power and periphery is clearly visible though. For example, the

erosion of tribal structures is largely caused by environmental degrading making water and land in the Darfur region scarce for African subsistence farmers and Arab nomads alike⁵⁷, forcing these once *friendly* neighbors to compete for diminishing resources (Natsios 2008, 81).

While the differences between groups in Sudan are in many ways artificially constructed, the fundamental reconstruction of national identity is not addressed under the CPA. Instead, the agreement has recognized these differences, giving the leaders of the North the right to continue an Arab-Islamic agenda, and giving the South in the interim its own virtual independence but with the option to secede. The question, ‘what is Sudan?’ remains unanswered. (Jobbins 2008, 12)

In the meantime, another line of conflict in the country’s struggle between center and periphery had surfaced, in February 2003, opening an East-West Axis of confrontations. This time, the central government ruled by the NIF/NCP was confronted by the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) of the Western region of Darfur supported by SPLM/A.

The seeds of the conflict in Darfur were sown by decades of government exploitation, manipulation, and neglect; recurrent episodes of drought and increasing desertification leading to competition for ever-diminishing resources; a flow of arms and people caused by earlier wars in Chad; and the failure of the international community to hold the government of Sudan accountable for the human rights abuses committed over two decades in other regions of the country. Paradoxically, however, the immediate spark may have been progress in negotiations to end the twenty-one-year-long north-south conflict, which created fears among Darfurians that they might be excluded from the power- and wealth-sharing formula being negotiated by the government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) [...] In response [to SLA assaults], the Bashir government launched a vicious counter-insurgency campaign in Darfur, patterned after earlier campaigns it had conducted in southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains, using a proxy militia force, the so-called Janjaweed, made up of members of nomadic Arab tribes. (Clough 2005, 27)

The Janjaweed are described by traditional leaders in Darfur “[...] as men who own a horse and a G-3 rifle and who commit crimes against civilians” (Dagne 2007, 6). In fact, these crimes have caused significant hardship for the people of Darfur and have been condemned worldwide. The Northern army and its proxy the Janjaweed have been accused of committing genocide in Darfur *inter alia* by the U.S. Congress and then-Secretary of State Colin Powell (de Waal 2004). German genocide expert Wolfgang Benz

⁵⁷ Both groups are Muslim.

defined it as genocidal event, which is distinct from ethnic cleansing. While genocide aims to annihilate a group, ethnic cleansing is targeted on eviction and expulsion to erase cultural traces with the intent of seizing a territory (Benz 2006, 182). The International Criminal Court's Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has made countless statements on the situation in Darfur over the last years, presenting his cases against Sudan's president al-Bashir and others who allegedly committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Again, in June 2008 he proclaimed:

The entire Darfur region is a crime scene. For 5 years, civilians have been attacked relentlessly. In their villages. Then into the camps. They cannot return. Their land has been usurped. To plan and commit such crimes, on such a scale, over such a period of time, the criminals had to mobilize and coordinate the whole state apparatus, from the security services to the public information bureaucracies and the judiciary. Cover up of crimes by Sudanese officials, pretending that all is well in Darfur, blaming crimes on others, is a characteristic of the criminal system at work. We have seen it before, in Rwanda, in the former Yugoslavia, in my own country Argentina during the military dictatorship. (Office of the Prosecutor 2008)

Despite this clear recognition of the events still unfolding in Darfur, both the United Nations and the Bush administration shied away from formally declaring the attacks genocide, fearing that this step would unravel the fragile peace between the North and South and deplete any leverage the international community might still hold on Sudan's government (de Waal 2004).

"Human costs are stunning [...] The genocide in Darfur has led to the deaths of at least 300,000 and the displacement of more than 2.5 million people, with 210,000 persons newly displaced since January 2008" (Smith/Sullivan/Sweet 2008, 5). The African Union (AU) as well as the United Nations has been active in Darfur to help ease the tensions, protect civilians and assist in solving the conflict. An AU peace monitoring force - The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) - has been on the ground since 2004, gradually raising its troop levels and agreeing on close cooperation with the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) (United Nations Security Council 2005). Finally in 2007, a joint AU-UN peace keeping force was established especially for Darfur (United Nations Security Council 2007). The African Union - United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has the mandate to primarily support the peace process and the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), facilitate humanitarian assistance, and help protect civilians (Peace and Security Section of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations 2007). The ill-equipped AU troops are now part of UNAMID. The joint force's

ability to fulfill its mandate is being obstructed in many ways. Bureaucratic hurdles by the Sudanese government and at the United Nations, understaffing, attacks on UNAMID by rebels and others which are not being answered, all undermine the Operation's credibility (Fowler/Prendergast 2008, 3-4) and put a strain on AU-UN relations and future cooperation (ibid., 6).

Already in 2005, Sudan's government signed a peace agreement with the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), the SLA's political arm. However, the JEM, as well as one significant splinter group of the SLM/A were not included. The DPA is similar to the CPA but failed to gain popular support in Darfur. Furthermore, the government is being accused of violating the agreement, mainly by not demobilizing the Janjaweed. Whether the DPA will be fully implemented, remains doubtful and failure might likely result in an intensified conflict (Dagne 2007, 10-11).

U.S. involvement in Sudan in general and in the conflict in Darfur in particular has a long history. In every peace agreement that was reached throughout the decades U.S. influence has been substantial. The Sudanese-American relationship is one of the most important ones the U.S. maintains in Africa. Ending the Sudanese civil war between North and South was one of the Bush administration's top foreign policy priorities during its first tenure (Clough 2005, 7). Acting as the leading humanitarian assistance provider to Sudan, the U.S. has funneled billions of dollars to the developing country⁵⁸. "But the bulk of our aid was and is to provide food, clothing, and shelter to populations under duress; far less has gone to the development programs that can address Sudan's underlying contradictions" (Smith/Sullivan/Sweet 2008, 5).

The attacks of 9/11 changed U.S. relations all over the world. Sudan played an especially important role in the new realignment of U.S. foreign policy due to three considerations: The country had harbored Osama bin Laden in the 1990s, it is predominantly Muslim and it has ties to terrorist organizations. It was even designated a state sponsor of terrorism in 1993 (United States / National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004, 108-109). Therefore, post 9/11 the focus of cooperation shifted to counter-terrorism. When international

⁵⁸ Since 2004 alone, \$3.9 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance have been transferred to Sudan and Eastern Chad by the U.S. (Smith/Sullivan/Sweet 2008, 5).

support for the U.S. wavered in the wake of the Iraq war and its related scandals such as Abu Ghraib, “Khartoum seized the opportunity by portraying U.S. accusations on Darfur as part of a global American assault on Islam and Arabs” (Clough 2005, 8). However, this incident did not result in a fiercer U.S. approach but rather led U.S. foreign policy “[...] to return to its earlier policy of trying to use carrots” (ibid.). The U.S. became docile with the Sudanese government when presented with President al-Bashir’s promise of assistance in the war on terrorism (Totten 2007, 95).

Three special envoys were sent to Sudan consecutively. Robert Zoellick, the second envoy, helped to negotiate the CPA. After he left office the Bush administration delayed a new appointment for months. Finally, Andrew Natsios took over this post with a special focus of his work lying on Darfur (Copson 2007, 93). In the case of Darfur, the Bush administration in general had been reluctant for a long time to strengthen its involvement (ibid., 98-103). It is noteworthy that Jendayi Frazer, the Bush administration’s last head of the Bureau of African Affairs, did touch on neither Sudan nor Darfur in her official introductory statement in the U.S. Department of State’s journal *Foreign Policy Agenda* (Frazer 2006).

The Enough Project⁵⁹, comes to the conclusion that “[t]he world promised Darfur protection, but has failed to deliver it” (Fowler/Prendergast 2008, 2). How will the next U.S. president perform? Will he declare Darfur genocide and pledge to end atrocities there despite the complexity of the issue at hand and an uncertain outcome? Or, will he maintain the current course? Do the candidates put forward alternative solutions?

In his assessment of fifty years of U.S. involvement in Africa, Herman Cohen concludes:

Whoever moves into the White House in 2009 will continue to balance U.S. interests in Africa as a source of oil and other important commodities, and our worldwide efforts to combat terrorism and corruption, rigged elections, the absence of transparency, and the continuation of human rights abuses in too many parts of the continent. American tolerance of continued African leadership failures is likely to decrease considerably, as well. (Cohen 2008, 24)

⁵⁹ The Washington-based NGO *Enough Project* lobbies against genocide and crimes against humanities and tries to raise awareness for these issues among U.S. citizens and lawmakers.

7.2. John McCain – A No Fly Zone to Save Darfur

It is noteworthy that, in comparison to the Democratic Party, there was no mentioning of Darfur in particular or the African continent in general in any of the Republican Party's primary debates. The only time a Republican presidential hopeful touched on any of these topics was when John McCain responded to a question about Russia and its foreign policy. The Senator once again renewed his plea for a *League of Democracies* “[...] to address issues from Darfur to Burma to Iran and others, because he [Vladimir Putin] and the Chinese are blocking meaningful action to keep us in a peaceful world in the United Nations” (CFR 2007g). Henceforth, the Republican presidential candidate's often proclaimed formula for the promotion of democracy was also his solution for Africa. A *League of Democracies* should spread democratic values, thereby ameliorating humanitarian crisis.

The Republican Presidential Nominee sought “[...] to engage on a political, economic, and security level with friendly governments across Africa” (McCain 2007b, 24). The *Helping those who help the U.S.* approach raised the question what the African *quid* of the *quid pro quo* calculation would have to be. Was Senator McCain going to adhere to President Bush's *war on terrorism* and the strings it attached to development aid and support for developing countries? In his assurance that he would “[...] support those who favor open economies and democratic government against populist demagogues who are dragging their nations back to the failed socialist policies of the past” (McCain 2007a), he bolstered exactly that argument.

Despite an earlier statement in 2000 claiming that money spent on the fight against AIDS in Africa would be lost to corrupt governments, in 2008, John McCain pledged to make the eradication of Malaria one of his policy goals. This promise was not solely spurred by altruism: “In addition to saving millions of lives in the world's poorest regions, such a campaign would do much to add luster to America's image in the world” (McCain 2007b, 24).

John McCain's approach to Africa was limited with respect to several dimensions. A narrow focus on friendly democracies would exclude the countries in greatest need from necessary support. Leaving those countries behind would prove devastating not only for their populations but also for regional and potentially U.S. security. Comprehensive pre-

vention needs long-term engagement in the most vulnerable regions and states which lack strong institutions – and these are most often also the least friendly towards the U.S. (Smith/Sullivan/Sweet 2008, 22).

Together with Democratic contenders Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, who at that time was still running against Obama for her party's nomination, John McCain issued a joint statement on Darfur in May 2008. All three candidates expressed their unwavering resolve to remain committed to the cause of Darfur's security and the protection of its civilian population, declaring the unfolding events genocide:

After more than five years of genocide, the Sudanese government and its proxies continue to commit atrocities against civilians in Darfur. This is unacceptable to the American people and to the world community.

We deplore all violence against the people of Darfur. There can be no doubt that the Sudanese government is chiefly responsible for the violence and is able to end it. We condemn the Sudanese government's consistent efforts to undermine peace and security, including its repeated attacks against its own people and the multiple barriers it has put up to the swift and effective deployment of the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force. We further condemn the Sudanese government's refusal to adhere to the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the conflict in southern Sudan.

Today, we wish to make clear to the Sudanese government that on this moral issue of tremendous importance, there is no divide between us. We stand united and demand that the genocide and violence in Darfur be brought to an end and that the CPA be fully implemented. Even as we campaign for the presidency, we will use our standing as Senators to press for the steps needed to ensure that the United States honors, in practice and in deed, its commitment to the cause of peace and protection of Darfur's innocent citizenry. We will continue to keep a close watch on events in Sudan and speak out for its marginalized peoples. It would be a huge mistake for the Khartoum regime to think that it will benefit by running out the clock on the Bush Administration. If peace and security for the people of Sudan are not in place when one of us is inaugurated as President on January 20, 2009, we pledge that the next Administration will pursue these goals with unstinting resolve. (Rodham Clinton/McCain/Obama 2008)

Despite this fierce repudiation of Sudan's government's actions no clear message on any U.S. plans was conveyed. The allegation of genocide was repeated by all candidates.

John McCain's solution apparently consisted of isolating the "[...] pariah state [...]" (McCain 2007b, 23) of Sudan. To him, particularly the situation in Darfur, offered "[...] the most compelling case for humanitarian intervention" (ibid., 24). He made a clear commitment to the Darfurian people, declaring that the genocide happening in that part of the country demanded "U.S. leadership" (ibid.). On the other hand, the Republican candi-

date never mentioned the CPA apart from his joint statement with his Democratic contenders. A majority of experts acknowledged the interconnectedness of the issues at hand. Furthermore, McCain had pushed for fiercer sanctions on Khartoum not only by the U.S. but also by the European Union and its members (McCain/Dole 2006). While “[...] the government of Sudan has survived years of sanctions imposed by the United States [...] [m]ultilateral targeted sanctions, including oil embargo, travel ban, and asset freeze, might have serious impact, especially if enforced by the international community” (Dagne 2007, 13). The viability of such an approach is limited by Sudan’s manifold connections and economic partners apart from those countries traditionally perceived as *the West*. China and Russia as well as many Arab states conduct business with the oil-rich country. Unless a unified international ban is imposed, Sudan might well be able to keep on surviving despite enforced sanctions. An approach limited to the participation of likeminded democracies would therefore not yield the results desired. Additionally, this approach did not take into consideration the fragile peace process between the North and South. Any disturbance of revenue sharing between those two factions might disrupt the already challenged implementation of the CPA.

Another necessary part of the solution advocated by John McCain would be a no-fly zone over Darfur. The Republican Presidential candidate was not the only one to believe in such a tool. On the contrary, most candidates in the 2008 race held the same opinion. Both Barack Obama and his running mate Joe Biden also proposed to impose a no-fly zone. In history, this military option has been used only in Bosnia and several times in the current Iraq war. “The term ‘no-fly zone’ is used to describe a physical area of a nation that is patrolled using airpower of another sovereign state or coalition” (Benard 2004, 455). This already raised the question of a no-fly zone’s legitimacy in the context of international law. Unilateral or even multilateral military strikes without the consent of and authorization by the United Nations Security Council would be widely condemned and would certainly further undermine the already tarnished image and legitimacy of the UN. A panel of expert’s report recommended that the Security Council consider the installation of a no-fly zone (United Nations Security Council 2006a, 8), however a consensual agreement upon such action is highly unlikely given China’s assets in Sudan’s oil production (Clough 2005, 7).

In addition, without the consent of Sudan’s Western neighbor the Central African Republic (CAR) it will be hard to fully enforce a no-fly zone. The U.S. will need permission to

enter CAR's airspace to follow and strike at Janjaweed or Sudanese army forces on this sovereign state's territory, if it does not want to violate international law (Benard 2004, 462).

While a no-fly zone is certainly the best and maybe only viable option to stop further aerial raids which the Government of Sudan is conducting in Darfur, destroying complete villages, forcing people to flee, and preserving them in a constant state of alertness and fear, it might not result in the desired outcome. Stripped of its airborne power, Sudan's army is likely to increase the pressure on the ground through the use of its proxy force, the Janjaweed. Due to its limited resources, UNAMID is not able to venture far from its bases, which limits its control to rather small areas. The government controlled militia on the other hand is highly mobile (Fowler/Prendergast 2008, 3). In summary, a no-fly zone would certainly deny the Government of Sudan the use of its airspace and would furthermore allow U.S. and/or international forces "[...] to monitor enemy ground positions and movements within the zone [...]" (Benard 2004, 455). However, without sufficient troops on the ground and their capability to prosecute enemies – a so-called *no-drive zone* – it would be a mostly useless endeavor (ibid., 255-256).

John McCain did not elaborate in detail on his military and civilian plans accompanying a no-fly zone. It is therefore safe to assume that a comprehensive plan for Sudan had not been thought through.

Apart from military intervention and the promotion of democracy through his *League*, Senator McCain's most elaborate strategy proposed for African development was the spread of free trade and free markets.

7.3. Sarah Palin

During her short appearance on the national stage of U.S. politics, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin had little to add to the already meager information John McCain offered on his stance towards African policies.

However, the Republican Party's vice presidential candidate touched on the crisis in Darfur in the televised confrontation with her Democratic contender Joe Biden, expressing support for a no-fly zone. Furthermore, Sarah Palin articulated her deep concern over the

ongoing violations of human rights in Sudan's westernmost region and explained how she had fulfilled her obligations as Governor of Alaska:

When I and others in the [Alaskan] legislature found out we had some millions of dollars in Sudan, we called for divestment through legislation of those dollars to make sure we weren't doing anything that would be seen as condoning the activities there in Darfur. That legislation hasn't passed yet but it needs to because all of us, as individuals, and as humanitarians and as elected officials should do all we can to end those atrocities in that region of the world." (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b)

Despite Sarah Palin's virtually non-existent experience in foreign policy and her consequentially limited testimonies especially on Africa, she seemed genuinely concerned and dismayed about the crisis in Darfur and wished to ameliorate the situation.

7.4. Barack Obama – An African Ancestry for an African-American Future

Barack Obama's Kenyan ancestry certainly made him more aware of African politics and U.S. African policies than his contenders. This fact and his outspokenness on African issues also earned him tremendous support not only in his paternal home Kenya, but throughout the whole continent. Many Africans hoped that his formula for *change* would also sweep their countries and raise U.S. development aid, support and interest for and in Africa (World Public Opinion 2008b, 11).

The Illinois Senator regularly addressed a whole range of issues concerning African policy. He demanded that the U.S. change its approach of turning its attention to the continent only after a crisis had started and asked "[...] what are we doing with respect to trade opportunities with Africa? What are we doing in terms of investment in Africa? What are we doing to pay attention to Africa consistently with respect to our foreign policy?" (CFR 2007b). He criticized the limited approach of seeing Africa merely through the lens of the *war on terror* and cited businessmen he had met on a trip to several African countries who lamented that "[...] the presence of China [was] only exceeded by the absence of America in the entire African continent" (NPR 2007). Senator Obama appeared to recognize the need for a more comprehensive U.S. policy towards Africa. Despite the lack of a clear statement on how his policy would play out in detail, he proved to show more apprehension of the complexity of the issue. He did not only focus on Sudan/Darfur but also talked about several other African countries. Furthermore he did not shy away from ad-

dressing issues such as corruption and anti-democratic practices on the African continent (Cohen 2008, 24).

In numerous publications and speeches Obama elaborated on his intentions to raise development aid and support for developing countries in general (Obama Biden 2008). For example, he wanted to give children in Africa more opportunities in life to keep them away from seeing violence as their only possibility (CFR 2007b). The Democratic presidential nominee suited his actions to the word for instance by co-sponsoring – together with Senator Biden - a bill to enhance health care capacities in Sub-Saharan Africa (S.805, 110th Cong. (2007)). Yet, Obama was not solely driven by humanistic idealism but he was aware of the stake the U.S. holds in African development. The newly instated AFRICOM, with its combined military-civilian approach, might therefore prove a valuable tool in the eyes of the Illinois Senator.

[...] we also have a strong national security interest. If you start seeing more and more failed states, more and more displaced persons, more and more refugees, all of that becomes a breeding ground for terrorist activity, it becomes a breeding ground for disease, and it creates refugees that put pressure on our own borders. In an inner-connected world we can't insulate ourselves from these tragedies. So, we're going to, over time, have to develop some strategy as the world's remaining super-power to address these issues, and Darfur is an important test case. We've already failed one test in Rwanda, we shouldn't fail another. (Obama 2006a)

Apart from the aforementioned joint statement with his contenders, he demonstrated his personal interest in the situation unfolding in Darfur. In 2006, he visited the conflict area together with his Republican colleague Senator Sam Brownback from Kansas. Furthermore, he proved his commitment by declaring that he had divested his personal holdings of stock related to Sudan, amounting to 180,000 USD (FOX News 2007a).

Obama believed that “[...] when genocide is happening, when ethnic cleansing is happening somewhere around the world and we stand idly by, that diminishes us” (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c). While he was adamant that a no-fly zone was highly relevant to protect Darfurians (CFR 2007b), he was aware of limitations to U.S. power caused by a lack of resources and support of allies. He intended to rally this support in the international community and lead efforts to ameliorate the situation (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c). Obama did not convey the same message concerning the imposition of a no-fly zone as his contender John McCain. While the same criticism already discussed in the context of the Republican candidate’s plans was also applicable to Barack Obama’s proposition, the Democratic nominee acknowledged that such a method

could only be part of a bigger solution: “The strength of our military has to be matched with the power of our diplomacy, the strength of our alliances. [...] That's how we're going to end a genocide in Darfur” (CFR 2007a).

This approach of a *method mix* was also Senator Obama's overall strategy for the whole continent of Africa and its development.

7.5. Joe Biden

In debates and speeches Joe Biden hardly ever discussed U.S. Africa policies. He did however, speak out on HIV/AIDS prevention, strongly opposing President Bush's approach on fighting the worldwide epidemic. The Delaware Senator believed that funding abstinence-only programs was a mistake and had therefore co-sponsored the HIV Prevention Act. If passed, this bill would have eliminated the requirement that one third of PEPFAR's funding had to be directed at the *A* of Bush's ABC approach, namely abstinence until marriage (S. 1553, 110th Cong. (2007)). Barack Obama also co-sponsored this piece of legislation.

Already in 2001, Biden had co-sponsored the Hunger to Harvest bill, “[...] encouraging the development of strategies to reduce hunger and poverty, and to promote free market economies and democratic institutions, in sub-Saharan Africa” (S. Con. Res. 53, 107th Cong. (2001)). Apart from a clear commitment to a free market ideology this resolution would have provided five and ten year plans of U.S. commitment to Africa concerning health, education, and other similar development issues.

In contrast to his otherwise little interest in Africa, Joe Biden was very outspoken on the topic of Darfur, taking his typical interventionist stance on the issue. Together with his close friend Republican Senator Richard Lugar he introduced “[a] resolution calling for the urgent deployment of a robust and effective multinational peacekeeping mission with sufficient size, resources, leadership, and mandate to protect civilians in Darfur, Sudan, and for efforts to strengthen the renewal of a just and inclusive peace process” (S. Res. 276, 110th Cong. (2007)). Neither Barack Obama nor John McCain co-sponsored this resolution. Biden was adamant that the U.S. should act to prevent the atrocities in Darfur

from continuing. He lamented that not acting was tarnishing America's image and depriving the U.S. of its moral authority (CFR 2007a). In the case of Darfur, acting for Senator Biden meant using force which in his eyes was "[...] justified and necessary [...]" (MSNBC 2007b). Despite his otherwise strong belief in the United Nations (Biden 2006), even unilateral, not UN approved U.S. action was not only acceptable to him, quite the contrary, he actively proposed it: "[...] we should have two years ago, absent the willingness of the rest of the world to act, put American troops on the ground to stop the carnage" (CFR 2007b). As a former lawyer and professor of law he is well aware of the obstacles international law poses to such an approach. Instead of lengthy explanations and justifications he legitimized his call for military force by quickly dismissing any rights the Government of Sudan might hold under the law of nations: "They have forfeited their sovereignty by engaging in genocide" (CFR 2007a). In detail, Biden's plan was not all that different from those of other candidates. He repeatedly demanded that a no-fly zone had to be imposed: "[...] we have the capacity by setting up a no-fly zone to shut down the Janjaweed. That's our moral authority. Exercise it" (ibid.). Again, an approach limited to a no-fly zone is unlikely to succeed. The Democratic running mate seemed to share that concern because he called for troops on the ground. Although he would apparently prefer the United Nations to do the job, he believed that the 21,000 UN troops required to help stop the genocide in Darfur could be substituted by 2,500 U.S. troops (CNN/YouTube 2007).

The Senator summarized his position on Darfur in his television debate with his contender Sarah Palin:

I don't have the stomach for genocide when it comes to Darfur. We can now impose a no-fly zone. It's within our capacity. We can lead NATO if we're willing to take a hard stand. We can, I've been in those camps in Chad. I've seen the suffering, thousands and tens of thousands have died and are dying. We should rally the world to act and demonstrate it by our own movement to provide the helicopters to get the 21,000 forces of the African Union in there now to stop this genocide. (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b)

Again, like the other candidates, Joe Biden offered a solution which is limited in scope, narrowing his approach to Darfur without taking the whole country of Sudan into the equation. Therefore, his propositions have to be met with the same criticism as those of his contenders.

Senator Biden's proposed African policies, however, demonstrated a more insightful stance, acknowledging health and education as essential factors for development.

8. To Bomb Or To Talk – A Comparison

Barack Obama and John McCain are either portrayed as being virtually the same or strictly antithetic. Neither of these strong ascriptions holds true. Both share a belief in and commitment to U.S. security and U.S. national interest. “In fact, once in office, Democratic presidents select their options from roughly the same set of choices that Republicans do” (Miller 2004, 42). For example, “[...] both Republican and Democratic presidents have negotiated with American adversaries many times in the past, including with the Soviet Union throughout most of the Cold War” (Miller/Parthemore/Campbell 2008, 7).

However, it is unlikely that both Obama and McCain would make the exact same decisions let alone follow the same general programmatic trajectory. Miller states that one “[...] differentiating factor is where U.S. presidents look for legitimacy [...]” (Miller 2004, 42) beyond America’s borders. Democratic contender Barack Obama made it clear in his Berlin-speech that he is determined to re-align with Europe and to re-strengthen transatlantic ties. These promises to and demands from Europe raised the spirits of multilateralists who had sharply criticized the Bush administration for its lack thereof. Republican contender John McCain on the other hand often emphasized America’s leading role in the world promising unilateral action wherever and whenever necessary to advance American interests. Nevertheless, he also rarely missed an opportunity to promote *his* League of Democracies. While the U.S. would certainly take the lead role in such an organization, McCain’s determination to embed U.S. action in an international multilateral framework other than the UN suggests a curbed unilateralism thereby enabling multilateralism for an elect few.

Sarah Palin’s unequivocal focus on military solutions to political problems is very pronounced in her approaches to all the countries and regions discussed. Furthermore, she is fairly outspoken in her belief in pre-emptive measure where deemed necessary by the U.S. Commander in Chief. Although John McCain tried to distance himself and his campaign from the Bush administration and its doctrine, Sarah Palin adhered quite closely to the latter in many of her assessments and propositions. All these factors indicate Palin as a true neoconservative with respect to foreign and development policy. Taking a closer look, it seems more reasonable though to retract this assessment. Her inexperience in for-

eign policies, her lack of knowledge of world affairs, as well as her ignorance of many aspects of Middle Eastern and African politics draw a different picture. Governor Palin very likely would be a neoconservative if she had adequate knowledge on the topics concerned. At the time of the election campaign, her expertise was not sufficient to make informed judgments and propose strategies encompassing broader approaches than mere military engagement and advancing generic allusions to humanitarian problems. Exactly this inexperience might have become an advantage for John McCain had he been elected, sparing him vice presidential interference. However, even with adequate expertise on foreign and development policy Sarah Palin by and large would have been on the same page as John McCain.

John McCain is a true neoconservative, who believes that

[...] the reason why we won the Cold War and the reason why we are still a shining city on a hill is because of our advocacy and our dedication to the principles that all of us are created equal and endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights. [...] I will continue to advocate for freedom and democracy and rights for all human beings." (CFR 2007c)

Furthermore, he agrees with the Bush doctrine (The New York Times 2008a). Despite his strong urge to promote democracy, free trade is more important to John McCain than human rights: "[W]e should make sure that every nation respects human rights, and we should advocate that and try to enforce it. But I will open every market in the world to Iowa's agricultural products. I'm the biggest free marketer and free trader that you will ever see" (CNN 2007b). Development of others and developing countries in general has to be subordinated to U.S. benefits, because "America is the greatest force for good in the history of the world. My friends, we have gone to all four corners of the Earth and shed American blood in defense, usually, of somebody else's freedom and our own" (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008c). To John McCain, this is the obligation of a *superpower* (The New York Times 2008b). However, the Republican nominee is not in favor of intervention at any cost. He only wants to use U.S. power where the objective to spread democracy can in fact be achieved. Despite this realistic evaluation he promises to strictly adhere to the neoconservative strategy of preemption – to eradicate future threats before they arise.

In other words, it is the war on terrorism rather than the war on poverty with [sic!] is driving the arguments. The first will take us to external re-colonization and re-legitimation of war ('bombing works'). The second one would entail dealing with the responsibility of the global economic order for misery, destitution and state-weakening in the South. For better

or for worse, attention is now centered on the first course of action [...] (Bendana 2006, 48)

Does Barack Obama center his attention on the *war on poverty*? He envisions a “[...] fundamental change [...] that's going to require the kind of aggressive diplomacy [...] to transform how the world sees us. That us [sic!] ultimately going to make us safer” (ABC News 2007). His linchpin is also U.S. national interest. Despite his opposition to the war in Iraq, Obama never ruled out the use of force as a viable instrument of foreign policy: “[...] I would not hesitate to strike against anybody who would do Americans or American interests' harm” (CNN 2008a). This might only encompass internationally acknowledged self-defense but could also hint at a broader commitment. Nonetheless, Obama proposes a broader set of alternatives than John McCain does. His slogan of *change* is a genuine promise to conduct certain aspects of foreign and development policy differently than a Republican president would do. Therefore, it will be necessary “to change the mindset that ignores long-term threats and engages in the sorts of actions that are not making us safe over the long term” (The New York Times 2008a). One of these fundamental changes Obama includes a renewed reliance on diplomatic efforts: “I will meet not just with our friends, but with our enemies, because I remember what John F. Kennedy said, that we should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate” (CNN 2008a).

In his rejection of the Bush doctrine of preemption, Barack Obama is united with his running mate Joe Biden, who in his own words stands for

[...] a foreign policy that ends this war in Iraq, a foreign policy that goes after the one mission the American public gave the president after 9/11, to get and capture or kill bin Laden and to eliminate al Qaeda. A policy that would in fact engage our allies in making sure that we knew we were acting on the same page and not dictating. And a policy that would reject the Bush Doctrine of preemption and regime change and replace it with a doctrine of prevention and cooperation [...] (Commission on Presidential Debates 2008b).

Although Joe Biden is widely described as an interventionist, it is doubtful that he would have anywhere near as much influence on a President Obama as Dick Cheney had on President George W. Bush. On the contrary, both Obama and Biden think that “[...] the primary role of the vice president of the United States of America is to support the president of the United States of America, give that president his or her best judgment when sought [...]” (ibid.). Therefore, the ultimate decision would always remain with the president.

Both presidential nominees' development policies have to be distilled out of their foreign policy directives, in the absence of more clearly pronounced positions.

John McCain will take a utilitarian approach to development politics using development aid and ODA as means to the end of U.S. security and the promotion of democratization. Funding will therefore be based on the evaluation of its usefulness although, in general, military action will be favored over humanitarian concerns and actions. In contrast to former Republican presidents, McCain lacks a prominent religious motivator but will be guided by ideological reasoning instead. The Arizona Senator wishes to counter poverty by spreading free trade regimes as far and as fast as possible. These will not only benefit developing countries but also establish new market outlets for U.S. companies and hence stimulate the U.S. economy. John McCain believes in free market economy. It is his conviction that liberalizations grant easier and broader market access, therefore trade barriers need to be abolished – a high priority task for the Republican nominee. As a consequence of the reduction of barriers such as tariffs, trade will increase thereby generating new jobs and income, and in turn, reducing poverty.

Barack Obama offers his vision on global development in a separate election campaign paper. It is his conviction that the U.S. has “[...] a significant stake in ensuring that those who live in fear and want today can live with dignity and opportunity tomorrow” (Obama 2007a, 13). Therefore, together with his running mate Joe Biden, he presents a strategy encompassing five parts:

- Make the critical investments needed to fight global poverty.
 - Expand prosperity by increasing the capacity of developing countries to generate wealth.
 - Support the building of effective, accountable, and democratic institutions and civil societies that meet the needs of their people.
 - Build the capacity of weak states to confront the common, transnational challenges we face including terrorism, conflict, climate change, proliferation and epidemic disease.
 - Structure the U.S. government to meet critical 21st-century security challenges.
- (Obama Biden 2008, 2)

Obama promises to double the foreign assistance budget to 50 billion USD and enhance U.S. efforts to achieve MDG 1 of halving global poverty by 2015. Furthermore, he outlines a broadly designed development perspective ranging from anti-corruption measures,

the combat of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and tuberculosis, to debt relief not only under the HIPC initiative but on a broader scale, including discouragement of *odious debt* (ibid., 3). The largest part of this so-called *fact sheet* focuses on the promotion of democracy and counter-terrorism. Nonetheless, such detailed propositions are rare in election campaigns and the fact that a presidential nominee *bothers* to include such bold promises for development in his campaign materials prove certain prudence. The quality and detail of the individual propositions vary but they make a positive impression throughout.

This elaborate master plan for development is unmatched by the McCain campaign. However, in Obama's speeches, his foreign policy essay or his statements in discussions and interviews the Democratic nominee was less insightful concerning his plan for a streamlined development policy. Nonetheless, the big picture is relatively coherent. As opposed to his challenger McCain, Barack Obama's foreign policy will take development into serious consideration without losing his focus on advancing U.S. interests as primary focal point – a type of development not reduced to democracy seen through an American-tinted lens and subordinate to the war on terror, but development on a broader scale focusing on the war on poverty which remains within the limits and constraints predetermined by foreign policy and U.S. security.

In conclusion, faced with the question whether to bomb or to talk, as opposed to John McCain, Barack Obama would emphasize diplomacy over military intervention. However he would never fully relinquish American *sticks* in the case *carrots* were not enough.

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Barack Obama was elected President of the United States of America on November 4, 2008 by a distinct majority of the U.S. population. A year has passed since the first African-American beat his rival in the race for the highest office in the U.S. and one of the most influential positions in the world. His foreign policy propositions were one of the main reasons why people voted for the Democratic instead of the Republican nominee. Exit polls showed that although the economy was the overwhelming priority of voters, foreign policy issues, such as the Iraq war and terrorism, came in second and third place, and “[t]hose who picked the Iraq war as their top issue mostly voted for Obama in all but two states [...]” (CNN 2008c).

All over the world people seemed to be, at least, relieved that *more of the same* had been prevented. A BBC poll conducted in September 2008 had predicted such reactions. It came to the conclusion that all 22 countries surveyed⁶⁰ preferred Barack Obama as president to John McCain, mostly by large margins (BBC World Service Poll 2008, 14). Even those few countries which had favored Republican incumbent George W. Bush over Democratic nominee John Kerry in 2004 changed their *allegiance* in favor of Barack Obama (ibid., 2). Underlying reasons for this apparently global trend are manifold. However, the same poll attests to the fact that the contenders’ foreign policy approaches had a strong impact on public opinion. Almost half of those surveyed believed that U.S. relations with the world would improve under a president Obama, but only 20% thought the same about a president McCain (ibid., 1). Even the U.S. public shared the same opinion on the last question, although Obama outweighed his opponent only by 16 percentage points with a 46% to 30% rating.

Were these expectations realistic? The analysis of the nominees’ Middle Eastern and African policies comes to the same conclusion. Barack Obama’s foreign policy outline and in particular his resultant development policy raised hope for a more positively involved U.S. development strategy. Promises of engagement rather than hedging, multila-

⁶⁰ Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Turkey, the UAE, the UK (BBC World Service Poll 2008, 4).

teral involvement instead of unilateral action, talks maybe not *in lieu of* but at least before bombs, and the perception of the world in shades of grey instead of a Manichean fight between good and bad monoliths were all part of a consoling internationalist rhetoric.

John McCain on the other hand did his best to consolidate *more of the same* with his critique of the Bush administration's conduct of foreign policy. Portraying himself as a *realistic idealist* (McCain 2008b) barely masked the Republican nominee's neoconservative agenda.

Rhetoric aside, predictions of how John McCain would have conducted his foreign and particularly his development policy are not verifiable. However, the outlines were clearly visible in his propositions and remarks.

John McCain's tough neoconservative stance leaves little room for development policies guided by humanitarian beliefs. His mistrust of international organizations and his Manichean worldview in which it is the American superpower's obligation to spread American-style democracy in the world and in particular to those places where Islamist terrorism has its strongholds would have led to *more of the same* at a more rapid pace encouraged by a stronger determination. Development for John McCain teleologically means rebuilding the world in America's image. His monolithic perception of other countries leaves no room for internal heterogeneity or nuanced insights. Therefore, McCain's development policies would have taken a modernistic *one-size-fits-all* approach of promoting democracy and free trade as harbingers of freedom for developing countries and cornerstones of U.S. safety and security: development of others not inspired by altruism but by nationalist selfishness.

Barack Obama was often portrayed as either the complete opposite or the exact same thing as John McCain. Particularly in Europe, the Democratic nominee was perceived as a pacifist – a notion repudiated by Obama. Although he never rejected war as a means of his foreign policy in general, he promised a more responsible U.S. global conduct. In comparison to his Republican challenger, Obama's world is not made up of two homogenous competing forces. He recognizes heterogeneity and takes the internal complexity of other countries into consideration. Therefore, he sees soft power as a useful tool and also acknowledges the need for a stringent development policy, despite the lack of a clear

9. Conclusion

outline thereof. Nonetheless, Barack Obama's primary concern is – and as President of the United States it also has to be – the well-being of his own country. Development policies will also have to serve the U.S. national interest. Development, in Obama's eyes, needs to fulfill people's basic needs (the absence of hunger, the provision of shelter and employment, etc.) before striving to change political systems. *Prima facie* his development perspective appears less aspiring than John McCain's. *De facto* rather the opposite is true. Blending multilateralism, diplomacy, the use of force, basic needs approaches, humanitarianism, engagement, an amelioration of transatlantic relations and especially American national interest and U.S. national security into one policy for development calls for a nuanced, *case-by-case* development policy.

Barack Obama was given the chance to prove that he is not all rhetoric but is able to suit his action to his ambitious word. Whether these actions will bring amelioration for developing countries remains to be seen. From a development perspective President Obama is not the absolute *savior* but he certainly is the lesser of two evils. His ambitious development policy will have to stand up to scrutiny several years from now.

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The Federalist:

The Federalist No. 64 (John Jay).

The Federalist No. 75 (Alexander Hamilton).

11. Appendix

11.1. Zusammenfassung

Am 4. November 2008 wählten die Vereinigten Staaten ihren 44. Präsidenten. Der Kandidat der Demokraten, Barack Obama, und jener der Republikanischen Partei, John McCain, standen einander im Wahlkampf gegenüber. Außenpolitik spielte eine zentrale Rolle in der Entscheidungsfindung der WählerInnen. Nicht nur der anhaltende Krieg im Irak, auch andere *hot spots* wie Afghanistan, Iran oder Darfur waren daher im Wahlkampf allgegenwärtig.

Die vorliegende Analyse der außen- und entwicklungspolitischen Vorstellungen der beiden Präsidentschaftskandidaten geschah anhand von vier Länderbeispielen im Nahen Osten – Iran, Afghanistan, Irak und Pakistan – sowie dem afrikanischen Kontinent mit Sudan als Spezialthema. Entwicklungspolitik war kein explizites Wahlkampfthema. Diskussionen über und Vorschläge für Entwicklungsländer verdeutlichten jedoch die Standpunkte der Kandidaten.

Aufgrund der Aktualität des Themas basiert diese Arbeit vorwiegend auf einer Medienanalyse. Wahlversprechen abgegeben in Diskussionsrunden, eingeübte Wahlkampfreden und Wahlmaterialien sind zwar sicherlich keine Garantie für zukünftige Verhaltensweisen, sie stellen aber wichtige Quellen dar, um Kandidaten, ihre Ideologie, sowie ihre Werte und politischen Schwerpunktsetzungen zu untersuchen.

Die beiden Kandidaten wurden im Spektrum der amerikanischen politischen Denkschulen verortet. Dadurch wurden die Unterschiede ihrer entwicklungspolitischen Ansätze klar sichtbar. John McCain hätte nicht nur sein Versprechen *mehr vom selben* (George W. Bushs Politik) umgesetzt, sondern die neokonservative Agenda stärker und stringenter verfolgt. Barack Obama auf der anderen Seite überschritt die Grenzen zwischen den einzelnen theoretischen Schulen und widersetzte sich mit seinen Vorschlägen einer klaren Einordnung. Seine (entwicklungs-)politischen Vorschläge sind vielgestaltig und auf jeden Fall einzeln zugeschnitten.

Vor die Frage gestellt, *to bomb or to talk*, würde Barack Obama, im Gegensatz zu John McCain, Diplomatie militärischer Intervention vorziehen.

11.2. Abstract

On November 4, 2008, the citizens of the United States of America elected their 44th president. In the first open seat election since 1928 Democratic candidate Barack Obama and Republican nominee John McCain competed in their run for office. Foreign policy played a vital role for the electorate's decision. Not only the ongoing war in Iraq, but also several other *hot spots* such as Afghanistan, Iran, or Darfur were therefore repeatedly on the campaign agenda.

An assessment of four Middle Eastern countries, as well as the continent of Africa with a case study on Sudan, provided the basis for an analysis of the presidential nominee's proposed policies. Development policies were no explicit topic in the election campaigns. However, propagated approaches to developing countries elucidated the candidate's standpoints.

Due to the topic's recency this paper is predominantly based on a media analysis. Election promises given in debates, stump speeches and campaign materials obviously do not constitute a future track record but they prove to be valuable sources as to politicians' underlying ideologies, values and political focal points.

Positioning the candidates in a broader spectrum of schools of thought allows for the conclusion that there are significant differences whether Barack Obama or John McCain determines U.S. (development) policies. John McCain would not only have lived up to his promise of *more of the same* of George W. Bush's foreign and development policy but would have taken the neoconservative agenda even further. Barack Obama on the other hand transcended categories and defied a strict classification with any school of thought. His proposed policies were versatile and tailored to each case, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Faced with the question whether to bomb or to talk, as opposed to John McCain, Barack Obama emphasized diplomacy over military intervention.

11.3. Curriculum Vitae

Jasmin Malekpour – geboren am 25. Februar 1983 in Wien.

Ausbildung

09/1989 - 07/1993	Volksschule Rohrbach an der Gölsern
09/1993 - 07/2001	Bundesgymnasium Lilienfeld, neusprachlicher Zweig
01/1999 - 06/1999	The Hills Grammar School, Kenthurst, Australien; Austauschsemester
10/2002 – heute	Studium der Internationalen Entwicklung, Universität Wien
01/2008 - 05/2008	Washington Semester Program in Foreign Policy, American University, Washington, DC, USA
10/2009 – heute	Lehrgang für Akademische Orientstudien, Österreichische Orient-Gesellschaft, Hammer-Purgstall, Wien

Arbeitserfahrung

03/2005 – 07/2006	Tutorin für die Lehrveranstaltung „AG Internationale Entwicklung: Probleme, Mechanismen und Theorien von Entwicklung und Unterentwicklung“, Universität Wien
10/2008 – 06/2009	
07/2006 – 09/2006	Assistentin der Organisatorin der IMISCOE-Konferenz 2006, Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien
01/2008 – 05/2008	Research Assistant, Center for Future Security Strategies, Hudson Institute, Washington, DC, USA
09/2009 – 02/2010	Lektorin für die Lehrveranstaltung „AG Einführung in die Internationale Entwicklung“, Universität Wien

Ehrenamtliches Engagement

01/2004 – 12/2006	Chefredakteurin der „Rohrbacher Jahreszeiten“, Rohrbach an der Gölsern
01/2008 – heute	Kommunalentwicklungsprojekt Bright Children of Angkor; Kambodscha
10/2008 – 04/2009	Recruitment Officer bei AIESEC Wien
01/2009 – heute	Mitarbeit im Projekt OEAD – IE

Sprachkenntnisse

Deutsch	Muttersprache
Englisch	fließend in Wort und Schrift
Französisch	gut in Wort und Schrift
Spanisch	Grundkenntnisse in Wort und Schrift
Arabisch, Farsi	Anfängerinnenkenntnisse