

Il secolo americano

Sezione a cura di Guido Bassi

Il "Secolo Americano" è ovviamente il secolo alle nostre spalle - il XX - ma è anche, nella mente di alcuni strateghi statunitensi, il "new american century" cioè il XXI sotto egida Usa. Questa sezione anziché svolgere una disamina storia e storiografica sugli Stati Uniti d'America nel Novecento, muove dal nodo della guerra in Vietnam, per trattare i fatti alla base degli avvenimenti recenti: la politica reganiana e la guerra in Iraq. Ad eccezione del testo riguardante la guerra in Vietnam, la sezione è in lingua inglese.

Iraq

di Guido Bassi

Introduction

In this essay I will try to answer the question ***Why did G.W.Bush decide to intervene in Iraq in 2003***

? Before answering this question, I think it is more important to understand who G.W.Bush is and especially who are the Neoconservatives (Neocons).

Just analysing the "Neocons" belief (how they see the U.S.A in the world), we will understand why the U.S did, and are doing, the second Iraq war, and why are they fighting a " Global terrorism " war. So in the first part of this essay I will try to describe who the Neocons are, how and why they started at the beginning of the 70's to set up military and geo-strategic research centres.

Then I will analyse the Neocons doctrine and its links with the foreign politics doctrines in the past like "The Manifest Destiny". I will try to underline the clash between US administration and the United Nation especially on the Iraq war. In the second part of the essay I'm going to write about why the Bush administration decided to intervene in Iraq, and why now.

WHO ARE THE NEOCONS?

Right now the Neocons, hold some of the most important positions within the G.W.Bush administration.

Within that "coalition" we can find P.Wolfowitz, D.Cheney, D.Rumsfeld, all them hold important positions in G.W.Bush administration, but we can find a lot of University teachers as well like F.Fukuyama, E.A.Cohen, N.Podhoretz, and D.Keagan.

The Neocons were born at the beginning of the 60's. Three events during this period moved away some American Jews from the most liberal " wing" of the Democrats.

The first event was the Arab-Israel war of 1967, on account of Israel finding itself alone on the international theatre and within U.N. In fact on account of it the UN started to set up sanctions against Israel.

The second event, was the huge demonstrations against the Vietnam war. Some politicians believed that the withdrawal from Vietnam could be the start of a new isolationist foreign policy.

The last event was the split of the alliance between American Jews and the "black power" movement^[1] ^[1].

These three elements shifted the Neocons to the right. At the beginning of the 70's the Neocons set up the "

Coalition for a Democratic Majority

(CDM), which made an agreement with the most conservative politicians of the Republican Party (D.Rumsfeld).

At the end of the 70's (1977), the CDM set up itself again in ***Committee on the Present Danger***

(CPD). The CPD was for a strong foreign policy and was against the reduction of nuclear weapons, its belief was " Peace through Strength"^[2] ^[2].

At the same time the Neocons started to make an alliance with the most religious people of the Republican Party.

This is the third element of the Neocons coalition (Neocon, right Republicans and Evangelical Republicans).

The CPD was one of the biggest supporters of R.Reagan's presidential campaign. He was a member of CPD, and when he became president he appointed 33 CPD members in his administration.

Almost of the Reagan administration members are now in the G.W.Bush administration, so it is clear why the ideology of G.W.B. is closer to the Reagan administration rather than that of G.Bush Sr.

The strong foreign policy, the splitting of the world into "good" and "evil", and a messianic vision of US role in the world, were some of the main beliefs of Reagan's administration, and they are in the G.W.B. administration as well.

In the middle of the 90's, the Neocons set up the **'Project for the New American Century'**.

It was set up according to D.Cheney's defence ideas, these ideas were drawn in the last years of Bush Sr administration. The main aim of PNAC is, to develop the leadership of the US in the world through a strong foreign policy, that should be on the opposite side of the foreign policy of the past administrations (Bush Sr and Clinton). The members of PNAC reject the **realistic** foreign policy of Bush Sr and the multilateralism of Clinton.

For the PNAC members, we can see by reading the reports on the PNAC web site^[3]_[3]

, after the end of the Cold War, just US is the global-power; the end of USSR is an opportunity that US could not pass up.

U.S.A. must earn as much as it can from the **"Unipolar Moment"**^[4]_[4]. The unipolar moment is the present geo-politic situation, US must shape the world according to its economical, geo-strategic and moral interests.

To shape the world how they want, US has to avoid the rise of the other global powers like USSR. They have to be able to control all main geo-political areas of the world.

Therefore the main topics of PNAC concern both geo-politic and moral aspects, like the spread of democracy and (trade) freedom.

The development of freedom, democracy, and free trade is, for the Bush administration, one of the main aims.

Moreover these values are the best to preserve the political, social and economic stability that US is looking for.

The "mission" of present America is linked with some of the most important and popular "American beliefs" like J. O'Sullivan's **"Manifest Destiny"** and **"City on The Hill"** Winthrop.

Both move from the U.S. exceptionalism and his role in the world. The Americans have to spread their values now in the world (Iraq) like they spreaded them in the middle of 1800 within the US territory. Spreading their values they will "bring" democracy and freedom into the Middle-East, as well as they "did" with the Mexicans in the middle of 1800.

Bringing the "Democracy" to Iraq is just the first step of Bush's global campaign to make the world "more safe".

This moral aspect is the first of Bush's Doctrine. The Doctrine is made of two main topics: the first one, how I wrote upon, is the development of US values; the second is it's geo-politic aim.

US has to shape the world according to his interests; there are two elements the US has to make to reach his aim.

- They have to change his foreign policy to a strong and aggressive foreign policy
- They need a huge rearmament.

The Neocons blame past administrations for having a weak foreign policy. Bush Sr and Clinton are thought to have had a realistic foreign policy, driven by U.N's needs and rules.

The G.W.Bush administration wants to change this policy. One of the belief of Neocons (like Reagan) is no more **Appeasement**

, in fact they are scared by a new Appeasement foreign policy. The US has to faith his enemies before they attack Us territory, US can not negotiate with the brutal dictatorship like Saddam's or Taliban's. For Neocons, Bush Sr and Clinton's foreign policy applied the appeasement belief; it shown by the unsuccessful overthrow of Saddam during "Desert Storm", and by the excessive multilateralism of Bill Clinton.

After the end of Cold war, the U.S. has become the only super-power in the world, they have to exploit as best they can the unipolar moment **'America's grand strategy should aim to preserve**

and extend this advantageous position as far into future as possible^[5]_[5]. Just with an international order according to US economical and strategic interests Us can spread its leadership over the world.

The "Pax Americana", that has given to the US peace, stability and power, will not freeze in time, U.S. has to preserve it, to reach its' geopolitical aims US must have a strong and powerful army,

"...the 21st century world is decidedly unipolar...today the task is to preserve an international security environment conductive to American interests and ideals^[6]_[6]

For Bush administration, United States has to place effort in to overthrowing hostile regimes forming them to its interests, this belief is one of the most important element to preserve the US supremacy on the world.

Such regimes like Iraq, Iran, Syria and Korea do not accept the international rules, so there is just one solution: U.S. has to overthrow these regimes with conventional army operation or follow the Reagan's model of financing rebel groups.

So it is clear that if America believes itself better than other nations, it will not need the support of U.N to lead a war somewhere in the world (Iraq).

Since the beginning, the Neocons have been "against" the United Nations way of acting, and especially, they have been against the international rules that limited its action. They believe that the international rules system, set up by the U.N, is not useful to US safety and to ensuring the world's stability and peace. We can see that position in the large discussion on the Iraq war in 2003.

For the Neocons the world needs a "cop", US has to be that cop, United Nations is just a big "meeting" centre where countries can speak about the problems of the world, but they cannot resolve them^[7].

Within United Nations there are a couple of states like China, Syria, etc. that are the biggest brake to democratic development. That is why U.S. has to set up **ad hoc** coalitions to fight the "enemy" everywhere they are; the "**Coalition of the willing**"

is just an example of what the Neocons believe, like "International coalitions". Before 9/11 Pakistan was on the list of states that supported the terrorism, but with the Afghanistan war, it became one of the "biggest" allies of US.

So, most of the G.W.Bush administration members believe that the end of Iraq will be the end of United Nations too; the world should not be led by the U.N system of rules, but by the US system of rules.

The second important element of the Neocons belief is a strong and large rearmament.

"At no time in history has the international security order been as conducive to American interest and ideals..."

^[8] to keep this opportunity US needs a strong military force.

Neocons blame the past administrations to have reduced the strategic defence budget.

^[1] J.Lobe, A.Olivieri, *I nuovi rivoluzionari: il pensiero dei neoconservatori americani*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2003, pp. 9-11.

^[2] J.Sanders, *Peddlers of crisis: The committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment*, South End Press, Boston, 1983.

^[3] www.newamericancentury.org

^[4] C.Krauthammer, *The Unipolar Moment*, "Foreign Affairs", America and the world 1990-1991 (www.foreignaffairs.org/19910201faessay6067/charles-krauthammer.html)

^[5] D.Keagan, G.Schmitt, T.Donnely, *Rebuilding America's Defences: strategy, forces and resources for a new century*, PNAC, 2000, Introduction. (www.newamericancentury.org)

^[6] D.Keagan, G.Schmitt, T.Donnely, *Rebuilding America's Defences: strategy, forces and resources for a new century*, PNAC, 2000, Introduction, (www.newamericancentury.org)

^[7] J.Lobe, A.Olivieri, *I nuovi rivoluzionari: il pensiero dei neoconservatori americani*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2003, p. 21-23

^[8] D.Keagan, G.Schmitt, T.Donnely, *Rebuilding America's Defences: strategy, forces and resources for a new century*, cit, p. IV. (www.newamericancentury.org)

Iraq - the latter end

If US do not meet the Neocons requirements, America will lose a global security order that is uniquely friendly to American principles and prosperity .

For the first time in 15 years, the 2001 defence budget may reflect a modest real increase in U.S. defence spending, for G.W.Bush administration the defence budget should be increased to 4% of the gross domestic product.

The lowest level budget was accomplished during Clinton's administrations, the spending level decreased from \$339 billion to \$277 billion in 1996 .

The military reforms, reform the army, stop the decrease of nuclear weapons, and the reform the CIA as well; in fact the intelligence services are basically an element of the war on global terrorism.

The struggle against the nuclear weapons reduction is one of the Neocon's topics. They tried to avoid the nuclear weapon reduction since the START agreements. Now US withdrew itself from the ABM treaty too, it was signed with USSR in 1972. In fact the ABM project was one of the main topics of Bush administration before 9/11.

To carry out these core missions, US needs to provide sufficient force and budgetary allocations. In particular US must:

Maintain nuclear strategic superiority, basing the US nuclear deterrent upon a global, nuclear net assessment that weighs the full range of current and emerging threats, not merely than US-USSR balance.

• restore the personnel strength of today's force to roughly the levels anticipated in the "Base Force" outlined by the Bush Administration, an increase in active-duty strength from 1.4 million to 1.6 million.

• reposition US forces to respond to 21st century strategic realities by shifting permanently-based forces to Southeast Europe and Southeast Asia, and by changing naval deployment patterns to reflect growing U.S. strategic concerns in East Asia.

War in Iraq. Why and Why now ?

At this moment terrorism is the U.S. biggest enemy. For G.W.Bush administration US could not avoid the clash with global terrorism, it concerns, within G.W.Bush's vision of the world, a clash between good and evil. Strength is the only language that the middle east country can understand,

US has to attack that country because they support global terrorism.

"...[the terrorists] benefit from State sponsorship, they can form alliance with governments hostile to US..."

For Bush administration the terrorist acts "...are a part of a coordinated long-term strategy in pursuit of political agenda shared by a broad-based and determined enemy..." .

So, that is why US has to leave the realistic foreign policy of the past years, they have to defeat its enemies with prevent attacks.

If we add all the elements of the Neocons doctrine, it is easy to understand why US started the Iraq war a second time.

Iraq is in the middle of a geo-strategic area, it is one of the biggest oil makers in the world, and the Bush administration believed (...and believe now...) it was linked to the Bin Laden terrorist net.

Moreover, US believed that Saddam owned weapons of mass destruction, and with that weapons he could attack US territory and their allies.

The overthrow of Saddam's regime could bring US to the middle of the Middle-East. It can set up a "democracy" that could be an example for the other middle-east countries, and moreover, the

Saddam regime (according to the G.W.Bush administration) overthrow could be a big defeat of global terrorism.

Most of the Bush advisers believe that the Iraq war is one of the most important steps to the defeat of terrorism

"...Without the war to remove Saddam, it's likely that the counter terrorism efforts of allied intelligence and security service in the Muslim world will diminish, if not end..." .

But the aim of this essay is not to understand if the Iraq war can make the world safer, nor to understand if the Iraq war has been the right answer to Saddam's brutal dictatorship, it is to analyse why U.S. has decided to start a war and why now .

I think that we can find most of the answers analysing the Neocons belief.

For me, the decision to start the second Iraq war did not took place after 9/11, but it has been on the Neocons minds for a long time, and they just needed a catastrophic event to let the war take place

"...further the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalysing event- like a new Pearl Harbour..." .

9/11

was the perfect event to act, the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction were the "perfect" topics to start a war on Iraq.

The main topics used by G.W.Bush administration to attack Iraq was the link between Al Qaeda and Iraq, and the weapons of mass destruction owned by Saddam.

The Terrorist attacks on September 11th, and the US military response in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda terrorist organizations and the Taliban militia that harboured it, led to a sharper focus on the Iraq problem.

The attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon, carried out by Al Qaeda operatives trained, led from their bases in Afghanistan, demonstrated the threat posed by terrorists who could seek safe haven in rogue nations with potential access to weapons of mass destruction.

As President Bush said in his January 2002 State of the Union Address "...States like these and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorist, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic..."

For almost one year (2002-2003) UN had tried to avoid the second war in Iraq. It set up an inspections system that could check if Saddam had weapon of mass destruction, but for US the inspections were a complete failure.

However, it is not the aim of this essay to analyse the inspections "failure".

On November 8th

the Security Council of UN approved Resolution 1441 to address "the threat Iraq's non compliance with Council Resolution, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles poses to international peace and security"; the Resolution was a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council.

But for President G.W.Bush, UN's resolution was a complete failure, Saddam would not stop producing weapons of mass destruction and would continue to violate the UN resolutions.

That is why US

should attack, for US administration, Iraq as soon as possible, it is believed to be a threat to US and its allies.

US wanted overthrow Saddam and set up a Democracy in Iraq, the world would have been safer.

The weapons of mass destruction were the perfect pretext to attack Iraq and US did everything they could to show Saddam had them.

So, the Secretary of State, Collin Powell, on February 5th 2003, went to UN to show that Iraq possessed WMD, while at the time, coalition forces in Iraq continued to search for WMD sites, but any sort of weapons of mass destruction has not been discovered yet.

That kind of weapon could arrive in the hands of terrorist groups, in fact regimes like Syria, Iran and Iraq can provide WMD to Al Qaeda terrorists. So, for Bush administration to avoid any kind of attack US has to destroy that kind of regime and terrorism.

The "best" way is an anticipatory self defence against terrorism and the rogue states that harbour it.

The anticipatory self defence was used in Libya, Panama and Afghanistan, to preserve the American interests and security, so it was not the first time the US used it as a means to protect itself. A preventive attack has served as justification for strikes against Iraq in the decade preceding March 2003. So Iraq could not be seen as an unusual case, but it could also be seen like the beginning of a new international "relations" age. It's clear that 9/11 and the Global war on terrorism started a new historical period, the multilateralism and the UN system of rules to preserve the global peace and to resolve the "problems" among the Nations, will be replaced by an "Anticipatory Self Defence" (preventive attack) made by US with the support of ad hoc coalitions.

This new kind of

international relations can be summarized in G.W.Bush's words at West Point Academy in 2002 "...if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long..."

The Secretary of Defence D.Rumsfeld, was one of the biggest supporters of the war and most of the Bush advisors believed that the unsuccessful overthrow of Saddam during "Desert Storm" was one of the US biggest mistakes; like R.Perle said "...was so clear that is something was not done that Saddam was going to come to emerge the survivor who had outlasted the U.N...so it was urgent to deal with Iraq, and we set a course of dealing with Iraq..."

So, for the G:W.Bush administration, something should have been done a long time ago, during the first Iraq war, and if now US is "threatened" by Saddam, it is just from the weaknesses of the past administrations and the U.N's weakness.

“...the fact that we tolerated the expulsion of the inspector was a tribute to weak leadership at the time that that took place...”

However not all Bush administration members and CIA members agreed with the Iraq war.

Within G.W.Bush administration there were people, like the Secretary of State C.Powel, that had more than one doubt about the war on Iraq.

There is another topic that could be one of the means of war on Iraq, it is the role that China will have in the world in the coming years. Reading “Our Ambivalent China Policy”

by G. Schmitt, we can understand that the war in Iraq was made also to provide to US more control on South-East Asia, and to limit the rising of China.

It is most likely China will be a super power in a few years. It will be on the same level as US both in economical and military power; US, how I wrote above, have to place any efforts into avoiding the rise of other world powers in South-East Asia. Since the beginning of the 20th century, US has tried to avoid other powers having control on South-East Asia, and the “Open Door” doctrine (1899) is just an example of that aim. That is why we can think the war in Iraq occurred to prevent the spread of China’s power too .

“...Next, China's extensive effort over the past few years to create an anti-hegemonic bloc--that is, an anti-US. bloc--blew apart. Within days of September 11, Moscow had cast its lot with Washington, as did the various "stans" of

Asia, including Beijing's longtime friend Pakistan. The United States now had troops and bases at China's backdoor. Add to this the new military-to-military ties between the United

States and the Philippines, and the growing cooperation between Washington and New Delhi, and Chinese strategic thinkers had to wonder whether America's war on terrorism

wasn't just an excuse to tighten the security noose around Beijing's neck...” .

Conclusions

I believe that is too early to find the real means for

war on Iraq, the war is still taking place, is it difficult to analyse the historical events when they are taking place.

In a few of years we are going to have more answers to question of why G.W.Bush waged the war on Iraq in 2003.

I believe that we can not say that the war in Iraq was just to have the control of one of the biggest oil producing countries in the world, there are a lot of reasons behind that war.

I think we have to understand the Neocons belief to understand, as well we can, the real means of the Iraq war.

The

Neocons belief was started 30 years ago, it is made up of by different topics, and just analysing them we understand why US for the second time waged war on Iraq.

Maybe the G.W.Bush administration has started a new historical age and maybe not, we cannot say that now. It has change the way

to lead the world and it has set up new kind of international relations.

I believe it is not the right way to lead the world and to make the world more safe. The war in Iraq did not defeat terrorism, it did not bring democracy to the Middle-East, and the “Coalition of the Willing” did not find any kind of weapons.

I think that a brutal dictatorship like Saddam’s and terrorists like Bin Laden are not in the same

“battle field”. Moreover, for me US is making the same mistake that they did during the Cold War. Now in the world there is more than one kind of

terrorism, like there was more than one kind of Communism. We have to be able to understand the differences

between all kind of terrorism in the Middle-East and the differences between terrorism and dictatorships like Saddam’s.

Saddam regime was not a Islamic fundamentalist regime, we can describe his regime as Fascist one, there is more than one big difference between Saddam and Islamic terrorists like Bin Laden.

That is why I believe that the policies of G.W.Bush administration are not the right way to defeat terrorism and they are not the right way to “bring” around world democracy.

Reagan essay

In this essay I will try to explain and analyse, how the “Vietnam Syndrome” influenced the Reagan Foreign Policy.

The case study in this essay is the Nicaragua covert operations, supported by Reagan administrations and CIA.

Nicaragua is a perfect example to explain and understand the Reagan Doctrine, was formulated by Reagan administration at the beginning of the 80’s.

This Doctrine had some common points with Eisenhower Doctrine, like the idea of “Roll Back” was used by Reagan Administration as well, and the promotion of covert operations in the Third world; especially Latin America.

In this essay I’m also going to explain the strong opposition that the Reagan Doctrine found within the US Congress, which behaved differently during the years, and the strong opposition among U.S. society influenced by the “Vietnam Syndrome”.

Nicaragua was not just a political, and military issue, but Reagan believed it was an ideological issue, Reagan was the political expression of a right reaction. The main aim of Reagan administration was to recapture the global power enjoyed by US before the Vietnam defeat.

So I will write about how and why US intervened in Nicaragua, and why they did not use US regular forces. Then, I will write about the opposition that the Congress and the public opinion made on the Nicaragua issue.

In fact, the final aim of this essay is to analyse how the “Vietnam Syndrome” influenced the political decision-making and the consequent action of the Reagan administrations.

For the Reagan administration the control of Latin America, and especially Central America, was a fundamental issue for U.S. national security, US economic interest and above all for US credibility around the world^[1].

The past administrations, were uninterested in the affairs of Latin America, especially with the Carter foreign policy, the U.S. had lost credibility and power in the region.

So Nicaragua became a fundamental point for Reagan. The defeat of Sandinistas government, would have shown to the world the restored US power.

The Reagan Doctrine intervening in the Third world was based on Proxy intervention in less developed countries through covert operations, lead by CIA. The CIA helped to organize military corps to crush leftist or populist governments.

These efforts were supported by a huge propaganda to show the communist threat. Reagan’s speeches were characterized by a robust rhetoric and messianic vision of US role in the world. This vision of the US role came from the Neocons beliefs which had a big importance in the Reagan administrations.

The Reagan doctrine was a revisitation of Eisenhower’s “Roll Back”. US had to defeat the U.S.S.R they could not have any agreement with the “Evil Empire^[2]”. So the Reagan Doctrine was not new, it was a reassertation of the basic Cold war precepts. U.S. had the strength and the duty to conduct secret wars against governments that Washington deemed undesirable.

But there are also differences in the Reagan Doctrine. The disdain for international law and institutions, is perhaps the most notable innovation of Reagan era.

The main obstacle to Reagan policy, and a direct military intervention with US troops, was the “Vietnam Syndrome”.

On account of the defeat in the Vietnam war, on account of the thousands of young people deaths, U.S. citizens and the U.S. public opinion became critical against any military action that did not show a clear threat to U.S. national security and to US citizens. Many sociologists said, U.S., after Vietnam, lost its innocence. No longer did U.S. citizens believed that the U.S. interventions abroad were noble or wise. The war in Vietnam, or in other Third world countries, would not have stopped communism and would not have worked to preserve U.S. security.

No longer would the public unquestioningly accept foreign policy justifications at face value, after the Vietnam war the U.S. military intervention should be justified and calculated.

That is why Reagan could not send any regular military forces in Nicaragua to overthrow the Sandinistas government. That is why he declared for a long period that his administration had no ideas of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.

So the only military options that he had were several covert operations lead by CIA and made by a paramilitary group, the "Contras".

The destabilization program was made by the Contras military operations as well as the end of the economical aid. This program had to incite the political and social opposition to Sandinistas and start a popular uprising.

Using the Contras instead of U.S. regular troops the administration envisioned a low-risk, low-cost war with a military and political payoff.

Although Reagan wanted to use regular troops to intervene in Nicaragua and overthrow the Sandinistas, but this option was impossible to carry out, because the "Vietnam Syndrome" was still alive in the mind and hart of the Americans. Just in 1983-84 CIA used its pilots to bomb Nicaraguan infrastructures.

But the Reagan administration efforts to overthrow the Nicaragua government were not made just by military and intelligence actions.

Reagan, through his speeches, tried to convince the Americans that Nicaragua was a direct threat to American security, and if the Sandinistas had not been stopped, Communism would have developed in all Latin America.

Reagan and his administration did not have a good relationship with Congress. In fact, after Vietnam war, the Nixon administration, and the Watergate scandal, the relationships between the legislative and the executive organs were not good. Congress placed more pressure and a stronger control on the President and the administration, especially about the war and foreign policy issues.

Congress had a different behaviour with Reagan administrations, and especially about the Nicaragua issue. Nicaragua and the Contras issue galvanized the Congress opposition like more than any other event, it provoked the first real crisis since Vietnam and the Watergate scandal^[3]_[3].

Reagan has never told the whole truth about Nicaragua, that is why, during the year, Congress had behaved differently.

In 1984, the Senate voted for a resolution that rebuked the President for mining Nicaragua's ports a year before, but a few days before the Senate had voted to provide \$21 millions to the Contras.

The relationships between Reagan administration, CIA and Congress were difficult since the beginning. Reagan and CIA tried to conceal the US involvement in Nicaragua, and the Iran-Contras Scandal is the biggest example of this difficult relationship.

The most clear example of Congressional opposition was the Boland amendment voted in 1982. This amendment permitted the CIA operation to continue but it banned expenditures for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras.

In 1983, the Congress, which was controlled by Democrats, voted the end of economic aid to Contras, but this resolution did not stop the "secret" economical and strategic aid to Contras.

The administration circumvented the law over and over. Reagan said for many years and many times that his administration had no ideas of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua. US aid could be restored just if the President justified it in a formal congressional report and if it would has been voted by congress itself.

The war had created a "crisis of confidence" between the administration and the Congress^[4]_[4], this lack of confidence was not new, it had deep roots, it was born with the Vietnam war and the Nixon "imperial" presidency.

The rift was deep, it concerned the American society, and public opinion as well.

One of Reagan's main aim was to purge the "Vietnam Syndrome" from American minds, and set up a consensus on the Nicaragua issue.

The main Reagan weapon used to join the US citizens and press into Nicaragua war, was a huge propaganda campaign during the years. It was made by rhetoric speeches and a continuous proofs

in 1985. The aim of this group was to show that the revolutionaries movements in Latin America were a direct threat to US security and way of life.

But the American government was active in repressing dissent as well, and the citizens with a different view of the Nicaragua issue encountered an official persecution. Reagan tried, and failed, to build a domestic and bipartisan support.

So now we can see at the beginning of the 80's the "Vietnam Syndrome" was still alive in American society, and it was able to lead the political decision making of any kind of administration.

In fact, Reagan was not the only and the last president to have been influenced by the "Vietnam Syndrome", it was still alive at the beginning of the 90's and it influenced president G.H.Bush during "Desert Storm".

I think that with 9/11, the US has finally been able to forget and to defeat the "Vietnam Syndrome", with the war in Afghanistan, but, especially, the war in Iraq is a clear example.

The US society was not so impressed when it discovered that in Iraq there was not weapon of mass destruction. More over it has confirmed its "faith" in President Bush one more time.

[1]^[9] J.Young, J.Kent, **"International Relation since 1945"**

, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004. pp. 564-565

[2]^[10] P.Kornbluh **"Nicaragua, the price of intervention. Reagan war against the Sandinistas"**,

Institute for Policy Studies, Washington D.C. 1987, p. IX.

[3]^[11] P.Kornbluh **"Nicaragua, the price of intervention. Reagan war against the Sandinistas"**,

Institute for Policy Studies, Washington D.C. 1987, p. 52.

[4]^[13] P.Kornbluh **"Nicaragua, the price of intervention. Reagan war against the Sandinistas"**jt. p.61.

La guerra in Vietnam

"We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Il 20 Gennaio del 1961, dalla collina di Capitol Hill, il Presidente John

Kennedy, rivolgendosi alla nazione la esortava a sopportare ogni peso e a pagare qualsiasi prezzo in nome della difesa della libertà.

Gli Stati Uniti oramai da 16 anni erano impegnati nella sfida ideologica, economica e militare che aveva come unico e ultimo obiettivo il contenimento dell'

U.R.S.S. e dell'espansione globale del Comunismo. La politica estera americana dal 1947 seguendo le linee tr

acciate dall'amministrazione Truman cercò di evitare con ogni mezzo che l'influenza sovietica (e dal 1949 anche quella cinese) si espandesse, mettendo a rischio la supremazia americana conquistata grazie allo sforzo bellico nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale.

A inizio anni Sessanta, nel momento in cui la leadership americana iniziava ad erodersi, e nuovi competitori si affacciavano sullo scenario internazionale, l'amministrazione Kennedy rinnovò, reinterpretandola, la sfida lanciata (o accolta, dipende dai punto di vista) da G.Kenan, proponendo accanto alla strategia del contenimento una più audace e innovativa missione: la Nuova Frontiera?

La sfida rilanciata dall'amministrazione Kennedy, aveva però un limite strutturale, che allo stesso tempo rappresentava il suo punto di maggior forza ma anche la sua debolezza. L'universalità della missione americana, rifacendosi alla tradizione wilsoniana, non consentiva all'establishment americano distinzioni geopolitiche, tanto meno militari. Il gioco a somma zero, dove il guadagno di una parte (U.S.A.-U.R.S.S.) implicava la perdita di influenza della controparte, non consentiva ai politici americani di interpretare con chiarezza le differenti situazioni geo-politiche e di elaborare, quindi, una risposta adeguata alla situazione che si aveva davanti. Non è difficile intuire come agli occhi delle amministrazioni, Berlino, il Vietnam o l'America Latina rivestissero, quindi, la stessa importanza strategica, e come ognuna di essa fosse di fondamentale importanza per la propria sicurezza e quella del mondo Occidentale. L'universalità della missione americana non permetteva eccezioni o distinzioni di nessun genere e fu così che il Vietnam divenne, per l'amministrazione Kennedy, una pedina fondamentale nella lotta al comunismo.

A inizio anni Sessanta perdere il Vietnam non avrebbe avuto solamente ripercussioni catastrofiche a livello strategico ma anche psicologico. Già dalla metà degli anni Cinquanta, l'amministrazione Eisenhower si era convinta che se il Vietnam del Nord, guidato dal leader comunista Ho Chi Min, avesse allargato la propria influenza sul Vietnam del Sud, governato dal dispotico e corrotto regime di Ngo Dinh Diem, con l'appoggio degli americani, sarebbe stato impossibile evitare un effetto domino in tutto il Sud-Est asiatico.

La paura di perdere il Vietnam, il timore

di un conseguente effetto domino in tutto il Sud-Est asiatico, così come era stata persa la Cina a fine anni Quaranta, spinse gli Stati Uniti a sostituirsi alla Francia nella penisola indocinese, e attraverso il sostegno economico e politico a mantenere in vita il fragile governo del Vietnam del Sud.

La penisola indocinese era stata divisa in diverse entità statuali nel 1954 con gli accordi di Ginevra, che diedero vita, oltre ad un Vietnam del Nord e uno del Sud, al Laos e Cambogia.

Nei due stati, divisi dal 17° parallelo, si sarebbero dovute tenere elezioni politiche entro il 1956 con l'obiettivo di unificare la nazione sotto un unico governo. Nonostante ciò la paura americana di vedere sconfitto l'impopolare e corrotto regime del sud a favore di una vittoria elettorale delle forze comuniste, spinse l'amministrazione Eisenhower a inviare già nella seconda metà degli anni Cinquanta i primi consiglieri militari e i primi aiuti economici al governo di Diem. Gli aiuti e l'assistenza americana, non sortirono però gli effetti desiderati, il governo di Diem a inizio 1960 era sempre più impopolare, la corruzione dilagava e le riforme in senso democratico sperate e volute dall'amministrazione Kennedy, che nel 1960 aveva vinto le elezioni presidenziali, stentavano a decollare, creando imbarazzo e perplessità tra l'opinione pubblica americana. Oltre ad attraversare una difficile e profonda crisi interna, il Governo Diem era insediato anche dall'esterno. Sempre più forte era, infatti, l'appoggio popolare dato ai Viet Cong, un gruppo di guerriglieri sud-vietnamiti sostenuto dall'Esercito popolare del Vietnam del Nord che lottava, adottando tattiche di guerriglia, per liberare i territori del sud e unificare il paese nel nome del socialismo. L'impegno americano in Indocina aumentò dunque rapidamente e già a

metà del 1961 il numero dei consiglieri militari americani nel Vietnam del Sud arrivava a 3000.

Le aspettative dell'amministrazione Kennedy continuavano però ad essere tradite dall'ambiguo regime del Vietnam del Sud e fu così che il 1 Novembre 1963 un gruppo di colonnelli dell'esercito, aiutati e appoggiati dal Dipartimento di Stato Americano, depose e uccise Ngo Dinh Diem, dando vita ad una giunta militare che si proponeva di unificare il paese e sconfiggere definitivamente la guerriglia comunista. Solamente 12 giorni dopo a Dallas il Presidente Kennedy veniva assassinato, lasciando nelle mani del suo successore, il texano Lyndon B. Johnson, la difficile situazione indocinese. Nonostante il cospicuo incremento di consiglieri militari in Vietnam tra, il 1959 e il 1963, non si può parlare di vera e propria guerra. Gli scontri armati tra il personale americano e l'esercito popolare del Vietnam del Nord furono inesistenti, i consiglieri inviati da Kennedy si limitavano, infatti, a supervisionare le operazioni militari a fornire supporto logistico e ad addestrare le truppe sudvietnamite.

A fine 1963 il coinvolgimento americano in Vietnam era, dunque, ancora marginale. La crisi nella penisola indocinese non calamitava ancora l'attenzione dell'opinione pubblica, e gli sforzi effettuati dall'amministrazione Kennedy per tenere nascosto o comunque sminuire il coinvolgimento americano, aumentarono tra il pubblico la percezione che il Vietnam fosse qualcosa di lontano che non gli avrebbe mai riguardati da vicino. Tutto cambiò una mattina del 7 Agosto 1964 con l'approvazione della "Risoluzione del Golfo del Tonchino". Tale risoluzione fu, ed è tutt'oggi, una tra le più controverse e dibattute risoluzioni della storia politico-istituzionale americana. Il 7 Agosto il Senato concesse ampio supporto per aumentare il coinvolgimento statunitense nella guerra "come il Presidente riterrà opportuno". La risoluzione lasciava aperte due questioni di fondamentale importanza: la prima di ordine giuridico. L'escalation militare in Vietnam

non fu preceduta da una formale dichiarazione di guerra del Congresso, la Risoluzione del Golfo del Tonchino, concedeva

si pieni poteri al Presidente ma non rappresentava una dichiarazione di guerra. Il conflitto vietnamita a livello giuridico non poteva essere dunque considerato una guerra, in quanto gli Stati Uniti non elaborarono mai una formale dichiarazione.

La seconda questione sollevata dalla risoluzione del 7 Agosto era di ordine istituzionale. Il Congresso, concedendo al Presidente ampi poteri, rinunciava al proprio diritto costituzionale di controllo della politica estera. In base al Secondo Emendamento della Costituzione, spettava, infatti, ai due rami del Parlamento decidere come se e quando impiegare le forze armate in combattimento. Ma in assenza di una dichiarazione di guerra e grazie alla Risoluzione del Golfo del Tonchino Johnson poté impiegare le forze armate senza essere soggetto a alcun tipo di controllo istituzionale, dando vita ad un escalation militare che in 11 anni provocò più di 50.000 morti tra i soldati americani.

Tutto aveva avuto origine pochi giorni prima, quando il 31 Luglio 1964 l'incrociatore americano Maddox riprese una missione di ricognizione nel Golfo del Tonchino, che era stata sospesa per sei mesi. Lo scopo era di provocare una reazione da parte delle forze della difesa costiera nordvietnamita, da usare come pretesto per una guerra più ampia. La Maddox subì un danno superficiale ma che fu sufficiente come pretesto per iniziare il conflitto. La tattica americana funzionò alla perfezione e poco meno di un anno dopo l'incidente, 3.500 US Marines sbarcarono nel Sud unendosi ai 25.000 consiglieri militari.

La strategia militare adottata dal dipartimento della difesa americano si fondava su un intenso bombardamento aereo delle postazioni nordvietnamite e delle installazioni dei Viet Cong, vera spina nel fianco delle truppe americane. L'imponente macchina bellica messa in campo dagli americani non bastò, tuttavia, ad avere

ragione dell'agguerrita e ben organizzata resistenza vietnamita. L'illusione del Dipartimento di Stato di poter vincere la guerra in 40 giorni, si scontrò con le pesanti perdite subite dal contingente statunitense. A inizio 1966 le truppe americane in Vietnam salirono alla cifra record di 500.000, una forza spropositata se paragonata all'esercito nordvietnamita.

Il continuo incremento del coinvolgimento militare avvenne mentre l'amministrazione Johnson e il generale W.Wesmoreland assicuravano ripetutamente il pubblico americano che il successivo incremento di truppe avrebbe portato alla vittoria, la "luce alla fine del Tunnel" era ormai ben visibile.

Le ottimistiche convinzioni dell'amministrazione Johnson vennero frantumate la sera del 30 Gennaio 1968, quando nei salotti americani la televisione, strumento ormai fondamentale per condizionare l'opinione pubblica, trasmise le immagini dell'Offensiva del Tet. Le truppe regolari dell'esercito popolare del Vietnam del Nord assieme ai Viet Cong organizzarono un imponente attacco nel sud. Pur non ottenendo alcun successo militare l'offensiva ebbe un forte impatto sul pubblico americano, creando la percezione che la guerra fosse ormai persa e che ogni ulteriore sforzo sarebbe stato inutile a risolvere una crisi iniziata male e conclusasi nel peggiore dei modi. Gli americani non tardarono a esprimere pubblicamente il proprio dolore e contrarietà ad una guerra che stava decimando un'intera generazione e di cui non si capivano gli obiettivi. Le manifestazioni di opposizione al conflitto si moltiplicarono, dando vita nei campus universitari ad un acceso e spesso violento scontro sulle responsabilità americane, ma soprattutto sull'intera cultura statunitense. La generazione dei "Baby Boomers", i figli nati dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, diede vita ad un intenso dibattito politico-culturale sugli obiettivi della politica estera americana e sulla società nel suo insieme. La contestazione studentesca, che contemporaneamente dilagava in tutto il mondo, fu rafforzata dalla decisione del Dipartimento di Stato di ristabilire la coscrizione obbligatoria attraverso un sistema che fu chiamato "lotteria di leva", il quale, attraverso un meccanismo perverso, estraeva a sorte le future reclute.

A fine 1968 era chiaro che gli Stati Uniti avrebbero potuto vincere la guerra ad un prezzo che la nazione non era disposta a pagare, il tentativo di conquistare i cuori e le menti sia a casa che in Vietnam era fallito, spettava al nuovo Presidente R.Nixon trovare una via di uscita dal pantano vietnamita. Nixon si rese subito conto che la guerra era ormai persa, adesso gli Stati Uniti dovevano riuscire ad ottenere una "pace con onore". La strategia adottata da Nixon per sganciarsi dal Vietnam fu però estremamente ambivalente. Da un lato intensificò i bombardamenti sul Vietnam del Nord, allargando le operazioni militari anche al Laos e Cambogia, dall'altro iniziò a ridurre il contingente militare americano provando ad ottenere una vietnamizzazione del conflitto. L'obiettivo della vietnamizzazione era di mettere l'esercito sudvietnamita in grado di reggere sempre più lo scontro con l'esercito del Nord. La "Dottrina Nixon" non si limitò solamente ad un intensificazione dei bombardamenti e ad un contemporaneo ritiro, di fondamentale importanza risultarono essere le trattative diplomatiche avviate a fine 1969 con l'U.R.S.S. e soprattutto con la Cina che aveva una forte influenza sul governo comunista del Vietnam del Nord. Avvalendosi della preziosa collaborazione del Segretario di Stato H.Kissinger, Nixon cercò di indurre la Cina a fare pressioni sul Vietnam del Nord e allo stesso tempo cercò di spaccare definitivamente le già difficili relazioni tra la Cina e i sovietici. La diplomazia risultò, quindi, lo strumento più efficace per uscire dal pantano vietnamita, e così a metà 1969 a Parigi iniziarono le trattative tra le parti. Se Nixon fece della diplomazia uno strumento irrinunciabile per risolvere la crisi vietnamita, è però importante sottolineare che negli anni 1970-1973 furono sganciate più bombe sul Vietnam che in tutti gli anni precedenti e che morirono più soldati che durante la presidenza Johnson.

L'accordo di pace tra gli Stati Uniti e il Vietnam venne firmato il 27 Gennaio 1973, Nixon annunciò il ritiro unilaterale delle truppe americane, impegnandosi tuttavia a fornire aiuti economici e materiale militare al Vietnam del Sud. La strategia di Nixon per non perdere il Vietnam risultò comunque inefficace, il Congresso resosi conto del terribile errore fatto nel 1964 con la Risoluzione del Golfo del Tonchino, vietò ulteriori finanziamenti all'azione militare in Indocina e negò a inizio 1975 qualsiasi aiuto economico al Vietnam del Sud.

Fu così che il debole regime sudvietnamita ormai abbandonato, capitolò il 30 Aprile 1975. Il Vietnam del Nord fu annesso a quello del Sud il 2 Luglio 1976 dando vita alla Repubblica Socialista del Vietnam. La sconfitta militare in Vietnam, la prima subita dagli americani, lasciò una profonda ferita nella cultura americana, esercitando una profonda influenza sulla politica estera americana, sulla strategia da adottare e sui mezzi per contenere l'Unione Sovietica. La politica del Contenimento, che aveva portato gli Stati Uniti in Vietnam, subì sostanziali ripensamenti. Gli americani non sarebbero stati più gli stessi, l'America aveva perso la propria innocenza nella giungla vietnamita.

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