

The Bush Revolution: The Remaking of America's Foreign Policy

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George W. Bush campaigned for the presidency on the promise of a “humble” foreign policy that would avoid his predecessor’s mistake in “overcommitting our military around the world.”¹ During his first seven months as president he focused his attention primarily on domestic affairs. That all changed over the succeeding twenty months. The United States waged wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. troops went to Georgia, the Philippines, and Yemen to help those governments defeat terrorist groups operating on their soil. Rather than cheering American humility, people and governments around the world denounced American arrogance. Critics complained that the motto of the United States had become *oderint dum metuant*—Let them hate as long as they fear.

September 11 explains why foreign policy became the consuming passion of Bush’s presidency. Once commercial jetliners plowed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it is unimaginable that foreign policy wouldn’t have become the overriding priority of any American president. Still, the terrorist attacks by themselves don’t explain why Bush chose to respond as he did. Few Americans and even fewer foreigners thought in the fall of 2001 that attacks organized by Islamic extremists seeking to restore the caliphate would culminate in a war to overthrow the secular tyrant Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Yet the path from the smoking ruins in New York City and Northern Virginia to the battle of Baghdad was not the case of a White House cynically manipulating a historic catastrophe to carry out a pre-planned agenda. Neither was it the foreign policy equivalent of Ahab’s hunt for Moby Dick.

Instead, the Bush administration’s response to September 11 reflected the logic of its own worldview—a worldview that is radical in its claims and ambitious in its reach. Although it was little noticed at the time, this worldview was evident in Bush’s campaign speeches and in the criticisms his leading advisers leveled against the Clinton administration. September 11 both gave the administration the opportunity to act on its worldview and forced it to develop its thinking in full. Historians will long debate whether this philosophy would have crystallized as clearly, or if Bush could have pursued the policies that flowed logically from its premises, without September 11 as a catalytic event. Perhaps not. But September 11 did occur. The result has been a revolution in American foreign policy—one that has potentially profound consequences for American security and the international order.

The Campaign

Presidential campaigns do not reveal everything about how a candidate might govern, but they almost always reveal something. George W. Bush’s 2000 presidential campaign was no exception. The impression that most people gleaned from the run-up to his election was that Bush was ill at ease discussing foreign policy and heavily reliant on his advisers. Yet anyone listening closely to what Bush and his foreign policy advisers said—and did not say—could discern

something else. The Texas governor and son of a president had clear views about how to run the White House, how to exercise America's unprecedented power in the world, and the relative priority of domestic and foreign policy.

The Candidate

It is ironic that foreign policy came to be the defining issue of George W. Bush's presidency. Throughout the campaign, doubters openly questioned whether he was smart and informed enough about foreign policy to be commander in chief. Of course, during the cold war voters had elected Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, neither of whom had been tested on the national stage by foreign policy crises. Yet both those men had well-developed and well-articulated worldviews. No one doubted Carter's smarts—he finished at the top of his class at the Naval Academy and had been a nuclear submariner. Reagan had been a union president, two-time governor of the nation's most populous state, and a three-time presidential candidate who put confronting the Soviet threat front and center in his campaign.

Bush lacked even these credentials. Although he grew up in affluence and was the son of a president and the grandson of a senator, he had traveled little outside the United States. Aside from frequent visits to Mexico during his governorship, his international travel had consisted of a six-week trip to China in 1975, a short visit to the Gambia in 1990 as part of an official U.S. delegation, a trip to the Middle East in 1998, and a few trips to Europe in 1990s with a group for corporate executives.² Moreover, by his own admission, Bush knew little about foreign affairs when he decided to run for the presidency. "Nobody needs to tell me what to believe," he said on the campaign trail. "But I *do* need somebody to tell me where Kosovo is."³

To help him locate Kosovo, Bush assembled a group of eight Republican experts, nicknamed the Vulcans, to tutor him on world affairs.⁴ The group was led by Condoleezza Rice, the provost at Stanford University and previously his father's White House adviser on the Soviet Union, and Paul Wolfowitz, the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and Undersecretary for Defense Policy in the first Bush administration. The other members of the Vulcans were Richard Armitage, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Reagan administration; Robert Blackwill, White House adviser on European and Soviet affairs in the first Bush administration; Stephen J. Hadley, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy in the first Bush administration; Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy during the Reagan administration; Dov Zakheim, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Planning and Resources in the Reagan administration; and Robert Zoellick, Undersecretary of State for Economics and White House Deputy Chief of Staff during the first Bush administration.

Bush's choice of these eight as advisers was significant because it signaled his own foreign policy predispositions. In the mid-1990s, the congressional wing of the Republican Party had been captured by what might be called the "sovereignists." Led by polarizing figures such as Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), they were deeply suspicious of engagement abroad and saw most international institutions, whether political or economic in nature, as bent on eroding American sovereignty. Their antidote to these trends was a mix of protection and isolationism. All the Vulcans, by contrast, favored international engagement and free trade. Still, they hardly represented the views of all internationalist Republicans. They were instead "intelligent hard-liners."⁵ Moderate Republicans with experience working in the Reagan and first Bush administrations were not invited to join the campaign's foreign policy team.

Bush's heavy reliance on his advisers often showed. In one interview, he vowed to act if the Russian army attacked "innocent women and children in Chechnya." When the reporter asked if that was already happening, Bush pulled the phone away from his mouth and shouted to Rice, "They are attacking women and children, aren't they?"⁶ Bush's frequent factual missteps on foreign policy became the fodder of late-night comedians. His struggle was perhaps best symbolized by a disastrous television interview he gave in 1999 in which he could not name the leaders of Chechnya, India, and Pakistan.⁷ In another interview laced in hindsight with irony he drew a blank when asked about the Taliban. When the reporter finally dropped a hint—"repression of women in Afghanistan"—Bush responded, "Oh, I thought you said some band. The Taliban in Afghanistan. Absolutely. Repressive."⁸

Bush's penchant for confusing Slovakia with Slovenia did not, however, mean he had no idea how to be president. To the contrary, he had well-developed views on the subject.⁹ These drew in part from his Harvard Business School education and running his own company. They also drew from watching his father's triumphs and failures. During the 1988 campaign, he assumed the role of what Nicholas Lemann called the "official kibitzer."¹⁰ He watched out for his father's interests and kept the campaign staff in line. After the election, he occasionally returned to Washington to play the heavy in intra-White House politics, most notably, in firing John Sununu as chief of staff. Unlike most presidential candidates, he had first-hand experience watching the White House function. And unlike vice presidents who have run for the country's highest office, he had watched presidents operate from both a staff and a unique personal perspective.

Bush was blunt during the campaign about how he viewed the job he was seeking—He would be the Chief Executive Officer of the United States of America.¹¹ That entailed three things. "The first challenge of leadership," he wrote in his campaign autobiography, "is to outline a clear vision and agenda."¹² A belief in the need to set clear objectives is perhaps not surprising for a man whose father's reelection campaign had foundered over "the vision thing." When asked what he had learned from his father's defeat in 1992, Bush answered, "It's important to have a strategy and set the debate."¹³ He pushed the point further in his first major foreign policy address as a candidate: "Unless a president sets his own priorities, his priorities will be set by others—by adversaries, or the crisis of the moment, live on CNN."¹⁴ Moreover, for Bush the top priorities had to be bold. Leaders did not merely tinker at the margins. As he said about becoming governor: "I wanted to spend my capital on something profound. I didn't come to Austin just to put my name in a placecard holder at the table of Texas governors."¹⁵ His presidential campaign platform—a \$1.6 trillion dollar tax cut, Social Security privatization, and ambitious missile defense—all attested to his desire not to spend his political capital on small things.

"The next challenge" of leadership, according to Bush, is "to build a strong team of effective people to implement my agenda."¹⁶ Many of his critics, and more than a few of his supporters, depicted his willingness to rely on others as a sign of weakness. He saw it as a sign of strength. He repeatedly reminded voters, "I've assembled a team of very strong, smart people. And I look forward to hearing their advice."¹⁷ He often used the quality of his advisers to deflect questions about his foreign policy qualifications. "I may not be able to tell you exactly the nuances of the East Timorian situation but I'll ask Condi Rice or I'll ask Paul Wolfowitz or I'll ask Dick Cheney. I'll ask people who've had experience."¹⁸ His job then was to be decisive—to pick among the options his advisers presented. "There's going to be disagreements. I hope there is disagreement, because I know that disagreement will be based upon solid thought. And what you need to know is that if there is disagreement, I'll be prepared to make the decision necessary for the good of the country."¹⁹

Third, Bush would stick to his positions even if that day's polling data moved the other way. A campaign mantra was that "We have too much polling and focus groups going on in Washington today. We need decisions made on sound principle."²⁰ Bush's insistence on standing firm on his priorities no doubt reflected smart political marketing. Americans thirst for politicians of deep conviction. Clinton had been widely criticized, fairly or not, for bending with the prevailing polling winds. However, Bush's sentiment, particularly if it is understood as a deep skepticism of conventional wisdom, probably also reflected his true feelings. His personal history reads as a testament to the fact that experts are wrong and things change. Few took him seriously when he decided to run for governor. His own mother predicted he would lose; most everyone else was convinced that his younger brother Jeb was the political star in the family.²¹ Pundits criticized Bush's rote repetition of his four campaign themes and his refusal to go "off message." He proved them wrong in defeating the popular Ann Richards. In office, he succeeded in enacting some of his priorities and failed in others. Still, his governing style was in keeping with his philosophy: "I believe you have to spend political capital or it withers and dies."²²

Underlying this approach to presidential leadership was a remarkable degree of self-confidence. Bush never confronted the obvious question: How would someone with little knowledge about the world know what the right foreign policy priorities were, decide whom to listen too when his seasoned advisers disagreed on what to do, know when his advisers came to consensus on a bad idea, or recognize when the conventional wisdom was in fact right. Then again Bush had reason to be self-confident. As Cheney explained it:

Well, but think of what he's done. He's the guy who went out and put his name on the ballot, got into the arena, captured the Republican nomination, devised a strategy to beat an incumbent vice president at a time of considerable prosperity in the country. None of the rest of us did that. And that's the test.²³

Indeed, how many other Americans who at the age of forty were running failing business and battling a drinking problem turned their lives around so completely that within a dozen years they became not just a two-time governor of the nation's second-most populous state but also a serious contender for the White House?

The Worldview

Bush's lack of foreign policy experience also did not mean that he lacked a worldview. He didn't. He sometimes describes himself as a "gut" player rather than an intellectual.²⁴ But during the campaign he outlined, at times faintly, a coherent foreign policy philosophy. It was visible first in what he said on the campaign trail. But it was also visible in a deeper way in the writings and statements of the people he chose to advise him on foreign policy. These views, while not always identical or consistent, differed significantly from both the policies of the Clinton administration as well as those of most previous Republican administrations.

At the level of broad goals, the foreign policy Bush outlined was hardly distinguishable from Bill Clinton's. Like virtually every major presidential candidates since World War II, Bush's foreign policy aspirations were Wilsonian.²⁵ He noted, "Some have tried to pose a choice between American ideals and American interests—between who we are and how we act. But the choice is false. America, by decision and destiny, promotes political freedom—and gains the most when democracy advances."²⁶ The United States, he argued, had a "great and guiding goal: to turn this

time of American influence into generations of democratic peace.”²⁷ In an implicit rebuke to the sovereigntist wing of the Republican Party, he endorsed active American engagement abroad and free trade. He warned that giving into the temptation “to build a proud tower of protectionism and isolation” would be a “shortcut to chaos . . . invite challenges to our power” and result in “a stagnant America and a savage world.”²⁸ Bush did criticize the temptation to use American military forces too freely, which led some to suggest that he himself was peddling a brand of soft isolationism. But, when pressed to name an intervention he opposed, he named only Haiti.²⁹

On another level, Bush’s foreign policy outlook could be summarized as ABC—Anything But Clinton. Bush’s public pronouncements and those of the Vulcans dripped with disdain for the forty-second president. In Bush’s judgment, Clinton had committed the cardinal sin of leadership—he had failed to set priorities. Bush clearly had Clinton in mind when he declared that presidents would always be tempted to let the nation “move from crisis to crisis like a cork in a current.”³⁰ The result was that Clinton had given the United States “action without vision, activity without priority, and missions without end—an approach that squanders American will and drains American energy.”³¹ Clinton’s mistake wasn’t that he believed America should be actively engaged in world affairs. It was that he had spent America’s power on matters of secondary importance.

What Bush promised in contrast was a clear set of priorities based on a hard-nosed assessment of America’s national interests.

These are my priorities. An American president should work with our strong democratic allies in Europe and Asia to extend the peace. He should promote a fully democratic Western Hemisphere, bound together by free trade. He should defend America’s interests in the Persian Gulf and advance peace in the Middle East, based upon a secure Israel. He must check the contagious spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the means to deliver them. He must lead toward a world that trades in freedom.

To read this pledge is to recognize how conventional Bush’s foreign policy goals were.

Bush’s stands on the two foreign policy issues that would come to define his presidency—terrorism and Iraq—were equally conventional. He vowed in his first campaign speech to “put a high priority on detecting and responding to terrorism on our soil.”³² For the most part, however, he, like Al Gore, seldom mentioned terrorism during the campaign. He did not raise the subject of terrorism in any of the three presidential debates, even though the third debate came just days after the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole*.³³

Bush’s views on Iraq were closely followed throughout the campaign given rampant speculation that he itched to avenge Baghdad’s attempt to assassinate his father. Asked what he would respond if president to the discovery that Iraq had resumed manufacturing weapons of mass destruction, he appeared to answer that he would “take him out.” When the moderator immediately followed up this answer, Bush said he would “take out his weapons of mass destruction.” The next day he said his original answer was “take ‘em out,” which people had misinterpreted because of his Texas drawl. “My intent was the weapons—they, not him.”³⁴ His standard line subsequently became that there would be “consequences” if Iraq developed weapons of mass destruction, though he studiously avoided saying what those consequences might be. He never said that he intended to use the U.S. military to unseat Saddam Hussein. Instead, like Gore, he supported the Iraq

Liberation Act, which gave the State Department \$97 million to parcel out among Iraqi exile groups dedicated to toppling Hussein's government. He also agreed with Gore that the policy of containing Iraq with sanctions should continue, insisting that "I want them to be tougher."³⁵

What made Bush's worldview distinctive—and even radical—was its logic about how America should act in the world. This logic, which was often more visible in the writings of Bush's advisers than in his speeches—the man from Midland after all took pride being a doer rather than an abstract thinker—has its roots in a strain of realist political thinking best labeled as hegemonist.³⁶ At its most basic, this perspective argues that American primacy in the world is the key to securing America's interests—and that it is both possible and desirable to extend the unipolar moment of the 1990s into a unipolar era. The intellectual predicate for this worldview was laid in a 1992 Pentagon study prepared for Dick Cheney and Wolfowitz.³⁷ That study, according to a draft leaked to the *New York Times*, maintained that U.S. national security policy after the cold war should seek to preclude "the emergence of any potential future global competitor."³⁸

The hegemonist view rests on five propositions—four of which are familiar to anyone steeped in the realist tradition of world politics championed until recently by generations of European leaders. First, the United States lives in a dangerous world, one closer to Thomas Hobbes's state of nature than Immanuel Kant's perpetual peace. "This is," Bush wrote, "still a world of terror and missiles and madmen."³⁹ He routinely criticized Clinton for confusing the world as it is with the world as it ought to be. Clinton, for instance, had failed to recognize that "China is a competitor, not a strategic partner."⁴⁰ Peril to the United States—from China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, terrorists—was a staple of Cheney's conversations.⁴¹ Rice criticized the Clinton administration for being soft in its Russia policy, saying, "if we have learned anything in the last several years, it is that a romantic view of Russia—rather than a realistic one—did nothing to help the cause of stability in Russia."⁴² The one-time superpower in fact "is a threat to the West and to our European allies in particular."⁴³

The second element of the hegemonist worldview is that self-interested nation-states are the key actors in world politics. Political and academic circles became enamored in the 1990s with the idea that globalization was undercutting states, empowering non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and reordering the structure of world politics.⁴⁴ Bush and his advisers would have none of it. They seldom mentioned globalization or NGOs when discussing foreign policy. Whenever they mentioned terrorism, they almost always linked the subject back to the threat of rogue regimes and hostile powers. For their part, world politics on the beginning of the twenty-first century looked no different than it had to Cardinal Richelieu or Prince von Metternich. States sought to advance their own narrow interests, not to create what Rice called "an illusory international community."⁴⁵

Third, hegemonists see power, and especially military power, as the coin of the realm even in a globalized world. "Power matters," Rice wrote, "both the exercise of power by the United States and the ability of others to exercise it." That is why the crucial task for the United States is "to focus on relations with other powerful states," especially finding "the right balance in our policy toward Russia and China."⁴⁶ In this contest with others, Bush argued, the United States enjoyed "unrivalled military power, economic promise, and cultural influence." The challenge facing the country, then, was "to turn these years of influence into decades of peace."⁴⁷ In short, American primacy is both real and usable.

But power is about more than just capability. It is also about will. Here Bush and his advisers scorned what they saw as Clinton's hesitance to flex America's military muscles in defense of core national interests. "There are limits to the smiles and scowls of diplomacy," Bush argued. "Armies and missiles are not stopped by stiff notes of condemnation. They are held in check by strength and purpose and the promise of swift punishment."⁴⁸

The Bush team's thinking about how to apply power was decidedly unsentimental. Unlike most Democrats, Bush and his advisers talked about exercising American power in terms of American interests rather than broader ones. Rice explicitly criticized those of "the belief that the United States is exercising power legitimately only when it is doing so on behalf of someone or something else."⁴⁹ Moreover, Washington should not be afraid of throwing its weight around. The lesson of America's "remarkable record" of building coalitions during the cold war, Wolfowitz wrote, is that leadership consists of "demonstrating that your friends will be protected and taken care of, that your enemies will be punished, and that those who refuse to support you will live to regret having done so."⁵⁰ The demonstration of resolve was as crucial for friends as for adversaries. They needed to be convinced that the United States intended to back up its words with deeds; otherwise, their suspicion that Washington might change its mind and leave them in the lurch could lead them to ignore American policy or even resist it. Wolfowitz told the story of how Saudi Arabia rejected the elder President Bush's offer immediately following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait to send a fighter squadron to help defend the desert kingdom. Only after Secretary of Defense Cheney traveled to Riyadh and assured King Fahd that the administration would send hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops did the Saudis conclude that Washington was committed to "finish the job."⁵¹ The lesson was clear: If America leads, others will follow.

The fourth basic proposition of the hegemonist worldview is that multilateral agreements and institutions are neither essential nor necessarily conducive to American interests. Bush did not flatly rule out working through international institutions. To the contrary, he at times spoke of working to strengthen organizations such as NATO, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund. However, he and his advisers articulated a distinctively instrumental view of formal multilateral efforts—they were fine if they served immediate, concrete American interests.⁵² As a practical matter, international institutions would usually be found wanting. That would force Washington to look first at forming "coalitions of the willing." The 1992 draft Pentagon planning document argued that coalitions "hold considerable promise for promoting collective action" and that "we should expect future coalitions to be ad hoc assemblies, often not lasting beyond the crisis being confronted, and in many cases carrying only general agreement over the objectives to be accomplished." But since America might often find itself alone, the planning document argued, "the United States should be postured to act independently."⁵³ To borrow a metaphor popularized by one Bush adviser, the United States would be the "sheriff" that organized the townspeople into a posse.⁵⁴ If the townspeople didn't want to ride out to meet the bad guys, Washington would happily take on the role of Gary Cooper in *High Noon* and face the bad guys alone.

The skepticism that the Bush campaign had for international institutions carried over to many international agreements. Part of Bush's critique was that many cold-war agreements had outlived their usefulness. The 1972 Antibalistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which severely limited any national missile defense system, topped the list. The broader argument, however, was that the Clinton administration had stopped viewing international agreements as a means to achieving American interests. It had instead transformed them into ends in and of themselves by pursuing what Rice called "symbolic agreements of questionable value."⁵⁵ Bush and his advisers rejected the

notion, popular with many in the Clinton administration and in Europe, that committing good words to paper would create powerful international norms. In the Bush view, such agreements constrained only the United States and other law-abiding countries, not rogue states bent on harming American interests. Given this reality, Washington would be better able to maximize its own security by minimizing the constraints on its freedom of action.⁵⁶ This policy of the free hand, which had its intellectual roots in the arguments that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge leveled against the Treaty of Versailles, rested on an important assumption: The benefits of flexibility far outweigh the diplomatic costs of declining to participate in international agreements popular with friends and allies.

Washington could get away with disappointing its allies because of the fifth tenet of the hegemonist faith: The United States is a unique great power and others see it so. This is the one proposition alien to the realist worldview, which treats the internal make-up and character of states as irrelevant. But it is a proposition virtually all Americans take as self-evident. “America has never been an empire,” Bush argued in 1999. “We may be the only great power in history that had the chance, and refused—preferring greatness to power and justice to glory.”⁵⁷ America’s “national interest has been defined instead,” argued Rice, “by a desire to foster the spread of freedom, prosperity, and peace.”⁵⁸ The purity of American motives is crucial because it meant that the exercise of American power would jeopardize only those threatened by the spread of liberty and free markets. A Washington that confidently exercised power would not alienate its friends or disappoint people ruled by tyrants. What Washington wanted was what everyone wanted.

Most of Bush’s advisers accepted this billiard ball view of the world, where the United States was the biggest (and most virtuous) ball on the table and could move every other ball when and where it wished. The one exception was Colin Powell, who Bush tapped as an adviser more for who he was than what he thought. Powell was not a Vulcan, seldom appeared publicly with Bush during the campaign, and did not form a deep bond with the Texan.⁵⁹ Powell’s views tended more toward traditional internationalism. Throughout his career he had urged caution in exercising American power. He saw more virtue in multilateral efforts and agreements; he was the only member of the Bush team to have endorsed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He was skeptical of missile defense. In accepting the nomination to be secretary of state, he implicitly rejected the president-elect’s insistence that the White House would set the policy agenda. The former national security adviser and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned: “During your administration you’ll be faced with many challenges, and crises that we don’t know anything about right now will come along.” Many of Bush’s other senior foreign policy advisers dismissed Powell’s cautious approach to American power as timidity, and they often savaged him privately to their allies in the press. When Wolfowitz was asked why he had agreed to become deputy secretary of defense, he reportedly gave a one-word answer: “Powell.”⁶⁰

While the hegemonists in the Bush campaign were united in their dislike for Powell’s worldview, they disagreed among themselves over a key question: To what extent should the United States use its power to promote America’s ideals? A minority was what might be called democratic imperialists. Led by Wolfowitz, they argued that the United States should actively deploy its overwhelming military, economic, and political might to remake the world in its image—and that doing so would serve the interests of other countries as well as the United States.⁶¹ Most of Bush’s advisers, with Cheney the most prominent, were assertive nationalists deeply skeptical that American power could create what others were unable to build for themselves. These advisers saw the purpose of American power as more limited—to deter and defeat potential threats to the nation’s

security.⁶² Because these threats also threaten others, America's willingness to stare them down enhances not only U.S. security but international security as well. Or, as the controversial 1992 Pentagon study put it, "the world order is ultimately backed by the U.S."⁶³

The Politics

Bush returned repeatedly throughout the election campaign to his argument that the United States needed clear foreign policy priorities. That is not to say, however, that he made foreign policy a top priority in his campaign. He did not. Unlike Ronald Reagan, who spoke incessantly and unapologetically about the need to confront Soviet power, he did not make any foreign policy initiative a central place in his campaign—nor did he travel abroad to enhance his bona fides. His top three priorities were instead all domestic initiatives—a \$1.6 trillion tax cut, education reform, and compassionate conservatism. While the Bush campaign provided plans that detailed how it intended to achieve these three objectives, its discussion of foreign policy initiatives—whether it was military readiness, missile defense, or better relations with Mexico—never went beyond listing aspirations.

Bush's decision to make foreign policy a secondary theme in his campaign reflected his own background and political vulnerabilities. Candidates taking remedial courses in world affairs are poorly positioned to tell the country to look overseas. Another political calculation also played a role—foreign policy was not a topic important to most voters.⁶⁴ Polls throughout the 1990s found that fewer than 10 percent of Americans—and often less than 5 percent—named any defense or national security issue as the most important problem facing the United States. Even when people were pressed to name a foreign policy problem, the most common response polls turned up was "Don't Know."⁶⁵

Indeed, a suspicion that Americans are at heart isolationists suffused the Bush campaign. In his maiden foreign policy address Bush warned, "America's first temptation is withdrawal."⁶⁶ He repeatedly denounced the Clinton administration's excessive deployment troops overseas. However, with the exception of Haiti, he generally avoided saying which overseas deployments he would end. The one exception was Haiti. (He and advisers neglected to point out that by 2000 the United States had only about 100 troops deployed in Haiti.) He regularly insisted that when deciding whether to use American power, the first question he would ask "is what's in the best interests of the United States."⁶⁷ This answer managed to say both nothing and everything. No one could disagree that a president should act in the country's interests, and it seemed to reassure a country lacking enthusiasm for foreign adventures.

What the campaign suggested was that for Bush, as it had been for Bill Clinton in 1992, foreign policy was a not matter of passion. He had to speak about world affairs to demonstrate his political credibility. He attempted to do so in a ways that maximized his appeal to voters, or at least limit the chances he would offend. On a few issues, most notably better relations with Mexico, he showed genuine enthusiasm and comfort, though here the domestic political benefits given America's rapidly growing Latino population were obvious. But the main message he sent to the American electorate was that his would not be a foreign policy presidency.

The Early Months

World affairs might not have been at the top of George Bush's priority list in January 2001, but many Republicans had high hopes he would act quickly and boldly on foreign policy. The White

House's actions in the spring and summer of 2001 gave them reason both to be discouraged and please. Although the administration did not launch any major initiatives of its own, it began undoing many of Bill Clinton's. In taking these steps, Bush showed a tremendous sensitivity to American domestic politics and almost none at all to how he was seen abroad. He also turned a deaf ear to warnings that Al Qaeda represented a clear and present danger to the United States.

Leaving the Gate Slowly

Many of Bush's supporters expected him to move quickly to make major changes in U.S. defense and foreign policy. Defense hawks assumed he would turn the defense budget tap wide open. Missile defense enthusiasts predicted a rapid U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and a new Manhattan Project to build a national missile defense. Beijing haters anticipated a push to redirect the U.S. military to counter a rising China, a blunt declaration of the administration's intent to defend Taiwan, and massive arms sales to Taipei. Isolationists on Capitol Hill looked forward to the rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops from Bosnia and Kosovo. Latino activists expected a major overhaul of U.S.-Mexico migration policy. Free traders looked forward to a push to revive the talks on a Free Trade Agreement for the Americas and a new round of world trade talks. Saddam-haters and armchair psychologists argued that the administration would move aggressively on regime change in Iraq.

Bush disappointed these expectations during his first eight months in office. In early February, he announced he would proceed with the Clinton administration's proposed 2002 defense budget request of \$310 billion and not seek a supplemental appropriation to add more funds to the 2001 budget.⁶⁸ He did not immediately withdraw from the ABM Treaty or launch a crash project on missile defense. When Bush finally gave a speech on missile defense in May, he strongly implied that the treaty's days were numbered. Nonetheless, he also emphasized that he intended to prepare the diplomatic ground for a U.S. withdrawal rather than present the world with a *fait accompli*. He spoke of his goal "to create a new framework for security and stability" with Russia, and he announced he was sending senior U.S. officials to consult with friends and allies.⁶⁹ A month later, Bush met Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time at a summit in Slovenia, got "a sense of his soul," and declared that Russia "can be a strong partner and friend."⁷⁰

Relations with China were more contentious, but the administration made concerted efforts to keep a lid on tempers. A collision between a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft on April 1, 2001, which destroyed the Chinese plane and a forced the American plane to land on Hainan Island, produced a crisis in U.S.-Chinese relations. Rather than escalate the confrontation, the administration quietly negotiated with Beijing. That diplomatically cautious approach continued even after China released the American crew. In late April, the administration broke with past practice and announced that it had authorized the sale of eight diesel submarines to Taiwan. In what administration officials acknowledged was a clear nod to Beijing's concerns, however, the White House decided against selling Taipei destroyers equipped with the advanced Aegis radar defense system.⁷¹ Two days after the arms sales announcement, Bush told ABC-TV's *Good Morning, America* that the United States would do "whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself."⁷² Within hours the president backtracked, saying he had not changed long-standing U.S. policy toward Beijing. His advisers confirmed that statement publicly and privately. A little more than a month later, Bush extended normal trade relations status for China for another year, stating that "the United States is committed to helping China become part of the new international trading system."⁷³

Bush's reluctance to undertake major new foreign policy initiatives during his first few months in office was evident on other issues that had figured prominently during the campaign. Secretary of State Powell announced in February that the United States would not remove its troops from Bosnia or Kosovo without the agreement of the NATO allies, saying: "The simple proposition is: We went in together, we will come out together."⁷⁴ Bush made a point of taking his first foreign trip to Mexico, and he declared (just days before September 11) that "the United States has no more important relationship in the world than our relationship with Mexico."⁷⁵ Nonetheless, he offered no concrete plans for resolving the outstanding issues in U.S.-Mexican relations. The administration's trade policy remained stuck in the inter-agency process.⁷⁶ Finally, Bush did not move aggressively ahead on a policy of regime change in Iraq, either through direct U.S. action or by empowering Iraqi exile groups to do so on America's behalf.⁷⁷ Instead, the administration opted to seek to replace the existing Iraqi sanctions with smarter ones.⁷⁸

Just Say No to Multilateralism

Rather than unveiling new initiatives, the focus of Bush's foreign policy during his first eight months in office was on extracting the United States from existing ones. In March, Bush abandoned his campaign pledge to curtail emissions of carbon dioxide from power plants.⁷⁹ Rice subsequently told European Union ambassadors at a private lunch that the Kyoto Treaty on global warming was "dead."⁸⁰ Thereafter the administration declared its determined opposition to a string of international agreements: a pact to control the trafficking in small arms, a new protocol to the Biological Weapons convention, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the International Criminal Court.

This "Just-Say-No" foreign policy was not limited to international agreements. Bush reined in a variety of U.S. efforts to broker peace around the world. At the top of the list was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which administration officials saw as the black hole of U.S. diplomacy. In a sharp break with Clinton, who had become personally enmeshed in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, Bush put U.S. engagement in the Middle East peace process on hold. He declined to send an envoy to the last-ditch Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at Taba, Egypt in late January 2001. The White House eventually eliminated the post of special Middle East envoy that Dennis Ross had held for eight years, and three months into the administration the National Security Council still did not have a senior director for Middle East affairs.⁸¹ The reason for this inaction was, as Powell repeatedly said, that "in the end, we cannot want peace more than the parties themselves."⁸²

Bush took a similar approach to North Korea. He abandoned the Clinton administration's efforts to strike a deal freezing the North Korean missile program in exchange for food aid, and he signaled that he had no intention of supporting South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" toward Pyongyang. Bush's hands-off approach carried over to mediating the conflict in Northern Ireland. Whereas Clinton repeatedly played the role of peace broker, Bush said "I am going to wait to be asked by the prime minister" of Great Britain. Tony Blair politely acknowledged the White House's withdrawal by saying, "It's difficult to perceive the exact circumstances in which I might pick up the phone and ask the president to help."⁸³ Bush also rejected suggestions that Washington do more to help end Colombia's civil war. He declined a request by Colombian President Andres Pastrana to have a U.S. envoy participate as an observer on peace talks between the government and its main guerilla opponent. Twenty-five other countries accepted the request.⁸⁴

In short, Bush delivered in his first months in office precisely the presidency he had promised. He had focused on a few key priorities and worked them hard. Those priorities just

happened to involve domestic, not foreign policy. The key legislative initiative was the \$1.6 trillion tax cut. When criticized by its supporters for failing to move more aggressively in unveiling its own initiatives the administration's standard defense that much of American foreign policy was under review.

Politics at Home and Abroad

The steps that Bush did take in foreign policy, however, suggested a keen sensitivity to domestic politics, and especially the demands of core Republican constituencies. On his third day in office, Bush reinstated the "Mexico City Policy," the executive order that Ronald Reagan had imposed and Bill Clinton repealed mandating that NGOs receiving federal funds agree to neither perform nor promote abortion as a method of family planning in other nations.⁸⁵ The practical importance of the decision was questionable, but the symbolic importance was not—pro-life groups had demanded the reinstatement of the policy. With the stroke of a pen Bush shored up his support with the Republican base, many of who had previously doubted his conservative credentials. The decision to proceed deliberately on missile defense was calculated at least in part to deny Democrats a political issue. They believed they had scored significant political points in the 1980s attacking Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" missile defense, and they hoped to repeat those successes by accusing the Bush White House of endangering the "cornerstone" of international stability. In contrast, by proceeding deliberately on missile defense and publicly reaching out to Russia, the White House looked to minimize the chances that its policy could be labeled reckless.

Domestic politics figured prominently in other Bush decisions. He based his decision to withdraw the United States from the Kyoto Treaty solely on domestic considerations, arguing that "idea of placing caps on CO₂ does not make economic sense for America."⁸⁶ Powell later admitted the decision had been handled badly, arguing that when the international "blowback came I think it was a sobering experience that everything the American president does has international repercussions."⁸⁷ The decision to delay action on a major trade initiative reflected a desire not to complicate the efforts to complete action on other, higher presidential priorities.⁸⁸ Bush also showed he was not above reversing course to accommodate domestic political realities. His decision to stick with the Clinton administration's defense budget proposals angered defense hawks on Capitol Hill. They quickly moved to open the spending tap. Rather than being trumped by Congress, the White House changed its tune. By August 2001, Bush had submitted a 2001 defense appropriation supplemental request and raised the 2002 defense budget request to \$343.3 billion.⁸⁹

The flip side to Bush's sensitivity to American domestic politics was his insensitivity to reactions in foreign capitals. During President Kim's visit to Washington in March, Bush angered the South Koreans when he used a joint public appearance to express his "skepticism" that the North Koreans could be trusted to keep their word.⁹⁰ The abrupt announcement of the decision to abandon Kyoto set the tone for a world already primed to believe Bush would pursue a foreign policy marked by "more arrogance and more unilateralism."⁹¹ As complaints abroad about American unilateralism grew in the spring of 2001, the White House did not back down. On the eve of his first trip to Europe in June 2001, Bush reiterated his opposition to Kyoto. While admitting that the surface temperature of the earth is warming and that human activity looked to be a contributing factor, he offered only to fund programs to study the problem, not as his opponents demanded, action to reduce the emission of heat-trapping gases.⁹² As White House speechwriter David Frum later wrote, with only some hyperbole, "Bush was extraordinarily responsive to international criticism—but his response was to tuck back his ears and repeat his offense."⁹³

The Bush administration's willingness to step on diplomatic toes surprised many observers, who pointed to Bush's constant refrain during the campaign that he intended to strengthen America's alliances and that his would be a foreign policy of "purpose without arrogance."⁹⁴ Nonetheless, Bush's unsentimental diplomacy flowed directly from his core beliefs. If all states pursue their self-interest, if power matters above all else, and if American virtue is unquestioned, then U.S. foreign policy should not be about searching for common policies. Rather it should be about pushing the world in the direction Washington wants it to go, even if the initial reaction is resistance. As Powell told European journalists, President Bush "makes sure people know what he believes in. And then he tries to persuade others that is the correct position. When it does not work, then we will take the position we believe is correct, and I hope the Europeans are left with a better understanding of the way in which we want to do business."⁹⁵ Nor was it lost on the Bush team that the allies' harsh words were unmatched by equivalent deeds. With the allies unwilling or unable to make the United States pay a price for its action, a change in policy hardly seemed necessary. The attitude Bush took to challenges to his domestic initiatives applied here as well: "We aren't going to negotiate with ourselves."⁹⁶

Two other factors encouraged the administration's conclusion that it could ignore complaints from foreign capitals. One was the firm belief that Bush was paying the price for Clinton's eagerness to do what pleased the allies, especially the Europeans, rather than what was right. Most of Bush's advisers believed that Clinton had indulged the Europeans in their misguided view that international agreements were as much ends in themselves as they were means. Changing that mindset required emphatic demonstrations that the old way of doing business was dead. Such "tough love" would produce vocal complaints, at least in the short run. Nonetheless, most officials in the Bush administration believed that if they stuck to their guns, the complaints would die away and the allies would adjust to the new style of American leadership.

The other factor reinforcing the Bush administration's willingness to ruffle diplomatic feathers was Bush's firm belief that chief executives do not change simply because their actions earn bad reviews. Shortly after returning from his first state visit to Europe, he told Peggy Noonan, once Ronald Reagan's speechwriter:

I think Ronald Reagan would have been proud of how I conducted myself. I went to Europe a humble leader of a great country, and stood my ground. I wasn't going to yield. I listened, but I made my point.

And I went to dinner, as Karen [Hughes] would tell you, with 15 leaders of the EU, and patiently sat there as all 15 in one form or another told me how wrong I was [about the Kyoto Accords]. And at the end I said, "I appreciate your point of view, but this is the American position because it's right for America."⁹⁷

Bush's description sounded more fitting of a cold war summit with Soviet leaders than a meeting with America's closest allies in peacetime. Nevertheless, he was supremely confident in the goals he had set for the U.S. policy, and he was willing to exercise patience in his effort to achieve them.

Bush's vision of the president-as-CEO showed itself in another way—he made clear to everyone in his administration that he was in charge. Unlike Reagan, who often could not decide between his oft-feuding friends, or Clinton, who always saw every side to an argument, Bush quickly earned a reputation among his advisers for decisiveness. Once decisions were made, he delegated authority to his subordinates to carry them out. Contrary to suggestions that he would be a pawn of

his more seasoned cabinet secretaries, he dominated them.⁹⁸ At one point or another during his first seven months in office, he overturned their decisions or spurned their recommendations. Rumsfeld was the first victim. His public commitment in February to seek a supplemental defense appropriations bill was quickly countermanded by the White House. In March, Powell had to retract his statement that the Bush administration would “pick up where the Clinton administration left off” in dealing with North Korea—“I got a little far forward on my skis” he later told reporters.⁹⁹ When Powell told Europeans in July that the administration would have a plan for combating climate change by fall, Rice followed by saying that there was no deadline and no plan. Environmental and Protection Agency Director Christine Whitman and Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill saw their recommendation for action to combat global warming rejected.¹⁰⁰

Underestimating the Al Qaeda Threat

In putting his mark on his administration, however, Bush failed to push his advisers to tackle the issue that would come to dominate his presidency—terrorism in general and Al Qaeda in particular.¹⁰¹ He seldom mentioned terrorism publicly during his first months in office. In early May, he announced a new Office of National Preparedness for terrorism at the Federal Emergency Management Agency but gave it no new resources. Except on the handful of occasions in which he justified abandoning the ABM Treaty because of the “terrorist threats that face us,” he did not mention the subject of terrorism again publicly before September 11.¹⁰² By all accounts, things were not much different in private. None of this is surprising. Bush’s worldview and the worldview of his advisers emphasized states—whether great powers or rogue nations—not stateless actors.

The outgoing Clinton administration had tried hard to challenge that assumption. Before Bush took office, Rice met with the man she was replacing as national security adviser, Samuel R. “Sandy” Berger. He told her, “You’re going to spend more time during your four years on terrorism generally and Al Qaeda specifically than any other issue.”¹⁰³ Other Clinton administration officials repeated the same message just as bluntly. About a week before the inauguration, George Tenet, who stayed on as director of central intelligence, met with Bush, Cheney, and Rice. He told them that Al Qaeda was one of the three gravest threats facing the United States and that this “tremendous threat” was “immediate.”¹⁰⁴ Brian Sheridan, the outgoing assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict, says he told Rice that terrorism is “serious stuff, these guys are not going away. I just remember her listening and not asking much.”¹⁰⁵ Lt. Gen. Don Kerrick, an outgoing deputy national security adviser, sent the NSC front office a memo on “things you need to pay attention to.” About Al Qaeda it said: “We are going to be struck again.”¹⁰⁶ During Bush’s first week in office, Richard Clarke, the top NSC staffer during the Clinton years on terrorism and a Bush administration holdover, handed Rice an action plan that said a high-level meeting on Al Qaeda was “urgently needed.” A subsequent memo argued: “We would make a major error if we underestimated the challenge al-Qaeda poses.”¹⁰⁷

These efforts did not convince the Bush team to move terrorism up on its list of priorities. Rice did not schedule the meeting of the Principals—the bureaucratic term for the president’s most senior foreign policy advisers—that Clarke had requested. Instead she reorganized the NSC’s handling of terrorism and effectively demoted Clarke. The new structure did nothing to elevate the prominence of the terrorism issue. Kerrick, who stayed through the first four months of the Bush administration, said “candidly speaking, I didn’t detect” a strong focus on terrorism. “That’s not being derogatory. It’s just a fact. I didn’t detect any activity but what Dick Clarke and the CSG [the Counterterrorism Strategy Group he chaired] were doing.”¹⁰⁸ Gen. Hugh Shelton, whose term as

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff began under Clinton and ended under Bush, concurred. In his view, the Bush administration moved terrorism “farther to the back burner.”¹⁰⁹

Bush administration officials later argued that throughout the summer 2001, and especially around July 4, they worked to prevent a possible Al Qaeda attack. The intelligence community had picked up increasing “chatter” in late spring indicating greater terrorist activity. Officials worried that Bush himself might be a target. They changed the venue for his meeting with Pope John Paul II in July to limit his potential vulnerability. These concerns did not, however, spur the administration to more aggressive action. Bush’s senior foreign policy advisers did not meet formally to discuss the intelligence intercepts.¹¹⁰ Nor did they revive the Clinton administration’s practice of keeping covert military assets on alert near Afghanistan to strike if the intelligence community located Osama bin Laden. Secretary of the Treasury O’Neill actually suspended U.S. participation in multilateral efforts to track terrorist money flows.¹¹¹ The plan that Clarke had proposed to go after Al Qaeda wound its way slowly through the bureaucracy. Bush’s senior advisers met for the first time to discuss the strategy—which was dedicated to “rolling back” Al Qaeda—on September 4.

After September 11, administration officials insisted that President Bush had complained during the spring and summer of 2001 that they were not moving fast enough to confront Al Qaeda. “I’m tired of swatting flies,” he reportedly said. “I’m tired of playing defense. I want to play offense. I want to take the fight to the terrorists.”¹¹² Bush’s own assessment of how he handled the Al Qaeda threat was far less flattering. He told Bob Woodward:

There was a significant difference in my attitude after September 11. I was not on point, but I knew he was a menace, and I knew he was a problem. I knew he was responsible, for the [previous] bombings that killed Americans. I was prepared to look at a plan that would be a thoughtful plan that would bring him to justice, and would have given an order to do that. I have no hesitancy about going after him. But I didn’t feel that sense of urgency, and my blood was not nearly as boiling.¹¹³

Bush had done what he promised during the campaign. He had stuck to his own agenda. Counterterrorism just happened not to be prominent on it. He would later discover the truth of Secretary-designate Powell’s warning: Events abroad do not always observe the priorities and schedules of even the most disciplined of presidents.

A Worldview Confirmed

September 11, 2001 shook the president, the nation, indeed, the world. The differences that had divided the United States from its allies and friends before the attacks gave way to widespread solidarity and support. “*Nous sommes tous Américains*” declared the left-leaning French daily *Le Monde*. Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schröder offered “unlimited solidarity” to the United States. All over the world people stood as one with the country that was so brutally attacked.¹¹⁴

With the global shock and sympathy came an expectation that September 11 would produce fundamental change in Bush’s approach to foreign policy. Many people at home and abroad assumed that the unilateralism that characterized the first seven months was dead, replaced by a firm embrace of multilateral cooperation. It was an expectation shared even by Bush’s father, who three days after the attack predicted that: “Just as Pearl Harbor awakened this country from the notion that we could somehow avoid the call to duty and to defend freedom in Europe and Asia in World

War II, so, too, should this most recent surprise attack erase the concept in some quarters that America can somehow go it alone in the fight against terrorism or in anything else for that matter.”¹¹⁵ Rather, international cooperation was the only effective way to combat what many saw as the dark side of globalization—transnational networks of terrorists bent on doing America and its friends immeasurable harm.

Within hours of the attacks, President Bush took several actions that seemingly substantiated the expectation of a new, more multilateral U.S. foreign policy. Washington turned to the United Nations, which on September 12 passed a resolution condemning those responsible for the attacks, holding accountable “those responsible for aiding, supporting or harboring the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these acts,” and authorizing “all necessary steps” to respond to the attacks.¹¹⁶ The administration also turned to its oldest and strongest partners in Europe, where for the first time in its history, the Atlantic Alliance invoked its solemn obligation to come to the defense of a fellow member under attack. Instead of lashing out alone, Bush set out to assemble a broad international coalition to fight the war on terrorism.

However, the expectation that September 11 had fundamentally changed the Bush administration’s approach to foreign policy was soon proven wrong. The decisions to go the United Nations and accept NATO’s invocation of Article 5 were tactical responses to the attacks, not a strategic conversion to the multilateralist creed. In fact, rather than seeing the terrorists attacks as repudiating their worldview, Bush and his advisers saw them as confirmation. They had argued for years that the world remained a dangerous place. In retrospect, the decade-long interregnum between the end of the cold war and the terrorist attacks (which is now best remembered as the post-cold war era) represented little more than what George Will called a “holiday from history.”¹¹⁷ As Bush told the nation nine days after the attacks, September 11 had awakened America to danger. “We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions—by abandoning every value except the will to power—they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism.”¹¹⁸

Al Qaeda had struck the United States in part because they hated everything America stands for. “They hate our freedoms — our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other,” Bush told Congress and the nation. “With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends.”¹¹⁹ The reason the terrorists believed they could accomplish this goal was simple—American weakness had invited it. To many in the administration, the dead at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the field in rural Pennsylvania had paid the price for Washington’s failure to respond forcefully to previous attacks. Vice President Cheney and others recalled the litany of terrorist attacks during the 1980s (in Lebanon) and the 1990s (including the bombings of the World Trade Center, Khobar Towers, the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the *U.S.S. Cole*). Washington’s response in virtually every case had been timid. “Weakness, vacillation, and unwillingness of the United States to stand with our friends — that is provocative. It’s encouraged people like Osama bin Laden . . . to launch repeated strikes against the United States, our people overseas and here at home, with the view that he could, in fact, do so with impunity.”¹²⁰ By implication, the best way to defeat terrorists was by restoring the credibility of American power, for it is power that matters most in international affairs.

The Bush administration recognized that defeating Al Qaeda would require improving homeland security within the United States and intensifying counterterrorist operations, especially

intelligence and law enforcement cooperation with other countries. The White House and Congress agreed to appropriate \$9.8 billion in additional homeland security spending immediately after September 11. In February 2002, Bush asked Congress to appropriate \$37.7 billion for homeland security spending in 2003, or more than twice the amount spent when he assumed office.¹²¹ Counterterrorism became priority number one at the CIA and the FBI.

Still, the focus of the Bush's administrations efforts weren't on building better defenses or gathering better intelligence but on taking the battle to the terrorists.¹²² Significantly, even as the Bush administration identified Al Qaeda and terrorists with global reach as the immediate threat, that meant targeting the states that harbored and aided them. "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them," the president declared the night of the attacks, in a statement now remembered as enunciating a new Bush doctrine.¹²³ Days later, Wolfowitz pledged that the United States would focus on "removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism."¹²⁴ The link between terrorist organizations and state sponsors became the "principal strategic thought underlying our strategy in the war on terrorism," according to Douglas Feith, the number three official in the Pentagon. "Terrorist organizations cannot be effective in sustaining themselves over long periods of time to do large-scale operations if they don't have support from states."¹²⁵

Given its overwhelming power as well as the fact that it had been the attacked, the United States would lead the fight against terrorism and their state sponsors. This would be a fight between the forces of good and evil—a fight in which there was no room for neutrality. "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," Bush intoned.¹²⁶ The seriousness of the situation and the gravity of the danger also meant that the debates about American unilateralism and divisions that resulted from them had ended. Rather than standing on the sidelines nursing grudges about Kyoto or the ABM Treaty, much of the world rallied to America's side in the wake of September 11. Bush believed that this reflected the clarity of his purposes and the strength of his leadership. "The best way we hold this coalition together is to be clear on our objectives and to be clear that we are determined to achieve them. You hold a coalition together by strong leadership and that's what we intend to provide."¹²⁷

September 11 did, however, change the administration's thinking in two ways. One was that the White House abandoned what had been its firm belief that great power competition trumped all in world politics and that no hostile great powers constituted the primary threat to U.S. security. That distinction now belonged to terrorists and rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction. Given that both Russia and China endorsed, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, America's war on terrorism, the White House went so far as to suggest that a fundamental strategic realignment among the great powers might be underway. Bush declared in his introduction to his administration's *National Security Strategy*, which was published in September 2002: "Today, the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war. Today, the world's great powers find ourselves on the same side — united by common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos."¹²⁸ With the great powers united by a common cause, the United States would have greater freedom to pursue terrorists and tyrants.

Second, September 11 moved foreign policy to the top of the administration's agenda. The terrorist attacks highlighted America's immense vulnerability; preventing another attack now became his overriding priority. "I'm here for a reason," Bush had told his chief political aide Karl Rove

shortly after the attacks, “and this is going to be how we’re going to be judged.”¹²⁹ The president’s friends and advisers described the impact of September 11 on his thinking in similar terms. “I think, in his frame, this is what God has asked him to do,” said one close friend.¹³⁰ According to a senior administration official, Bush “really believes he was placed here to do this as part of a divine plan.”¹³¹ “This” is what Bush refers to as the fight between good and evil—a fight in which America, representing the good, will triumph over the “evildoers.” Once the world is delivered from evil the good people everywhere will be able to get on with their lives free of fear. America’s mission—George Bush’s mission—is to make this vision come true.¹³²

Just as important as how September 11 changed elements of the Bush administration’s thinking on foreign policy was how it changed the American political landscape. In a replay of a phenomenon that has occurred repeatedly over the course of U.S. history, the attacks produced a tremendous surge in public support for Bush.¹³³ The pendulum of power immediately shifted away from Congress and toward the White House. Three days after the attack, a near unanimous Congress gave the president a blank check to retaliate against the terrorists, authorizing him “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons.”¹³⁴ On issues ranging from missile defense to the payment of U.S. back dues to the United Nations to sanctions on Pakistan, Congress checked its previous opposition and deferred to the White House.

The depth of Congress’s deference partly reflected the enormity of the attacks and a principled belief that crises require lawmakers to accede to strong presidential leadership. But Congress’s deference also reflected the Democratic Party’s weakness on foreign and defense policy. Polls had shown for years that the American public had far more confidence in the ability of Republicans than Democrats to handle national security issues. Worried that their criticisms would at best not be credible with the American people and at worst might sound unpatriotic, most Democratic lawmakers who would have preferred to criticize the White House opted for silence.¹³⁵ President Bush and his advisers—all of who already had expansive views of presidential authority—happily seized on the opportunity to act without having to clear their decisions with 535 secretaries of state.¹³⁶

The war on terrorism and its main initial components—the war in Afghanistan and dealing with what Bush would call the “axis of evil”—represented the logical outcome of the Bush worldview following the terrorist attacks of September 11. The world did not change that day, but the threat Bush intended to confront, the relative priority of foreign policy on his agenda, and his political freedom to act on his beliefs, clearly did.

Afghanistan

As soon as the twin towers collapsed it was clear the administration had to act. “Terrorism against our nation will not stand,” Bush declared moments after the second jet slammed into the south tower of the World Trade Center.¹³⁷ The question was how to respond. That Osama bin Laden was the likely mastermind behind the attack was evident to all who had focused on the growing threat of Islamic terrorism, including CIA Director George Tenet and White House counterterrorism czar Dick Clarke.¹³⁸ Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network had settled in Afghanistan, gaining full support of the Taliban, an Islamist regime that had taken power in 1996.

An entire infrastructure of terror, including training camps for many thousands of Al Qaeda recruits, had sprouted up since bin Laden's arrival from the Sudan.

Afghanistan became the immediate focus for any potential military response to the attacks. On September 17, Bush signed a "top secret" memorandum outlining plans for war against the landlocked Central Asian country.¹³⁹ Unfortunately the Pentagon, well known for its propensity to plan for every conceivable contingency, had no such plans for military action in this remote land. In 1998, the United States had fired cruise missiles against several Al Qaeda training camps in response to the bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. U.S. naval vessels had reportedly been on station during the later years of the Clinton presidency, ready to launch cruise missiles in the event that the intelligence community provided actionable information on bin Laden's whereabouts.¹⁴⁰ But aside from these minor military contingencies, there was "nothing on the shelf for this kind of war" according to Condoleezza Rice.¹⁴¹

The absence of detailed military options became painfully apparent in the initial NSC meetings, including a day-long session at Camp David, convened during the first week after the attacks.¹⁴² Rumsfeld asked probing questions and wondered whether other countries (including Iraq) needed to be targeted, but otherwise provided little concrete input on how the United States might respond militarily. General Shelton, Chairman of the JCS, presented the president and his advisers with a set of generic military options—attacking with cruise missiles only, adding long-range bombers, and putting boots on the ground alongside air power—which lacked imagination and, frankly, detailed thought. It was left to Tenet and his CIA team to present the most developed military option. Armed with a colorful set of PowerPoint briefing slides titled "Going to War" (each slide was illustrated with a picture of bin Laden inside a slashed red circle) Tenet proposed that CIA and Special Operations forces provide direct support (including by directing air strikes) to the main Northern Alliance opposition forces and other warlords to help overthrow the Taliban regime.¹⁴³ Bush was thrilled. Here was a plan for doing something decisive. Neither he nor anyone else stood still, even for a moment, to consider the implications of relying on the CIA, an information collection and analysis agency, to develop detailed policy proposals.

On September 17, Bush met with his advisers and told them what to do. Powell would issue an ultimatum to the Taliban—hand over bin Laden or the regime is history. Tenet was given full authority to pursue Al Qaeda members in any way the agency deemed necessary. His agents also were to begin providing full support to the Afghan opposition forces. Shelton was told to draw up detailed plans for an attack using missiles, bombers, and ground troops. "Let's hit them hard," Bush said. "We want to signal this is a change from the past. We want to cause other countries like Syria and Iran to change their view." For now, Afghanistan would remain the focus. The Pentagon should accelerate planning for possible military action against Iraq, but Bush said, this was a "firsts-things-first administration," and Afghanistan would come first.¹⁴⁴

Three days later, Bush made his decisions public in a widely and justifiably praised address to Congress and the nation. "Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in your land," Bush demanded of the Taliban. "Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating." There would be no negotiations or discussions. "The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate."¹⁴⁵ Despite intense diplomatic pressure, the Taliban rejected Bush's demands. On

October 7, U.S. and British air strikes began the Afghan war. The goal of the campaign was three-fold: to capture or kill top Al Qaeda leaders, destroy the terrorist infrastructure within Afghanistan, and remove the Taliban from power.

The Afghan war went through three distinct phases.¹⁴⁶ During the first phase, U.S. bombers and fighters attacked Taliban leadership sites, military installations, and other fixed targets as well as the terrorist infrastructure throughout Afghanistan. CIA operatives, meanwhile, worked to recruit Afghan warlords to America's cause. They provided the opposition with money and weapons, and they worked to turn them into more effective fighting forces. Special Operations Forces prepared to join the Northern Alliance and other opposition forces in an assault on the Taliban forces around Kabul and other major cities. In the second phase, U.S. forces guided massive air power against Taliban forces on the battlefield, enabling the opposition to break through the government's defensive lines. Within weeks, the Taliban were routed and opposition forces took control of all of Afghanistan's major cities. The final phase, which continued into 2003, consisted of U.S. and allied forces, often with support of local Afghan militias, mopping up Al Qaeda and Taliban resistance. Some of the battles involved intense fighting—including major clashes in the Tora Bora mountains in December 2001 and the Shah-e-Kot valley in March 2002.

The prosecution of the Afghan war followed from Bush's worldview in three notable respects. First, while the administration developed extensive counterterrorism links with other countries and began to consider how best to defend the country against attack, the focus of its response to the September 11 attacks was its offensive in Afghanistan. Not only did this highlight the administration's belief that the best defense is a good offense, but it also underscored its view of the terrorist threat as within a state-based framework. The ultimatum on the Taliban put responsibility for dealing with Al Qaeda squarely in the hands of the Afghan government. Its failure to meet U.S. demands led inevitably to its ouster. Yet, while the war removed a crucial support structure, it did not end the threat Al Qaeda posed to the United States.

Second, the administration stuck to its highly instrumental view of multilateral institutions. Although the Atlantic Alliance had rapidly invoked its Article V commitment making an attack on one an attack against all, the White House decided early on to sideline NATO and ignore most initial offers of materiel and combat support. A suspicious Pentagon argued that involving NATO would place too many constraints on America's freedom of action. This stemmed partly from a belief that the Kosovo war had revealed NATO to be cumbersome—a classic case of the “too many cooks” syndrome. But it also stemmed from Bush's insistence that other countries not be in a position to dictate terms for the war on terrorism. “At some point,” Bush conceded, “we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America.”¹⁴⁷

Skeptical of the value of making use of an established military alliance, the administration decided instead to form a coalition of the willing. “The mission determines the coalition and we don't allow coalitions to determine the mission,” Rumsfeld repeatedly insisted.¹⁴⁸ The partners were largely Anglo-Saxon countries—Britain and Australia in particular. They had a demonstrated record of working well with U.S. military forces and, just as important, with the White House. Even so, the war in its first phases remained essentially an American affair. The planning and execution of the war remained firmly in U.S. hands.

Finally, the manner in which the Afghan war was fought demonstrated that, for all the suffering that had already been inflicted on Americans, the Bush administration remained extremely

wary of demanding too much sacrifice of the American people. The president urged Americans to get on with their daily lives, to hug their kids, to go out and shop—but he did not initially ask them to join the fight in any real sense.¹⁴⁹ He also did not modify his fiscal policies to help pay for the vastly greater expenses of securing the nation against future attack. Moreover, even in war, the administration was reluctant to expose U.S. military forces to risks necessary to achieve crucial objectives. In a fateful decision, the administration decided to rely on Pakistani and Afghan forces to seal off the borders and pursue Osama bin Laden and many of his Al Qaeda fighters in the Tora Bora mountains in December 2001 rather than risk American casualties—with the result that bin Laden and many others were able to escape.¹⁵⁰ After the war, the administration defaulted on its promises of a Marshall Plan-like effort in Afghanistan.¹⁵¹ The actual level of U.S. commitment to securing the peace in the worn-torn country was minimal—with no U.S. troops assigned the crucial role of securing the peace in Kabul and other cities, and financial aid commitments being far below what is required to get this destitute nation on its feet.¹⁵² Indeed, the White House forgot to request funding for Afghanistan's reconstruction in its 2004 budget submission to Congress.¹⁵³

Overall, the first phase in the war on terrorism produced mixed results. The strategic innovation of the trinity of Special Operations forces, airpower, and local opposition forces proved to be devastatingly effective in ousting the Taliban. But it helped that the Taliban was, as Gen. Wesley Clark noted, “the most incompetent adversary the United States has fought since the Barbary pirates” in the early 1800s.¹⁵⁴ But the broader objectives of the Afghan war still had not been fully achieved by spring 2003. Bin Laden's capture or death had been a publicly proclaimed objective—on September 17, 2001, Bush said he wanted him “dead or alive.”¹⁵⁵ It was also a goal that Bush had pressed on his military commanders as an overriding objective.¹⁵⁶ Yet, few of the Al Qaeda leaders were captured or killed during the Afghan campaign, though some were subsequently captured. This left some to wonder whether a dispersed Al Qaeda network might not be as or even more dangerous than one whose leadership is concentrated in a single, known place. Thus, Gen. Wayne Downing, Bush's first national director for combating terrorism, suggested after the Afghan war that Al Qaeda is “probably more capable now than before.”¹⁵⁷ Whether true or not, Al Qaeda and its top leadership remained alive and in business.

Finally, there was the goal of permanently eliminating Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations. This goal was achieved—at least for a time. The terrorist infrastructure was destroyed, the terrorists were driven into the mountains or across the border into Pakistan, and the Afghan government stopped providing a hospitable place to bin Laden and his ilk. But the long-term success of this objective requires a successful transformation of Afghanistan into a viable state, able to control its borders and what goes on within them. Prospects for success are still far from certain, in part because by relying on local warlords and militias to fight the war the United States created a long-term security problem for Afghanistan—one that only the disarmament, demobilization, and integration of these irregular forces into the wider society can resolve. There is little indication that the administration intends to devote the effort and resources necessary to help make this happen.

The “Axis of Evil”

The Afghan war enjoyed broad international support. After initial U.S. resistance, and when for a time it looked as if the fighting might not go well, more than 25 countries eventually contributed troops to the fight—deploying special operations forces, aircraft, and naval vessels in support of the operation. And even now more than half the foreign military forces in Afghanistan are non-American. This widespread international support reflected the legitimacy of America's

cause in Afghanistan. After September 11, few countries doubted the need to rout Al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters; and most agreed that this effort was an essential response to the attacks.

But for most countries Afghanistan represented the pinnacle of the military involvement in what otherwise would be a largely non-military strategy to confront terrorists with global reach. Not so for the Bush administration, which saw Afghanistan as the first phase in a global war on terrorism. This became clear just four months after the September 11 attacks, when Bush declared that the threat confronting the United States derived not just from terrorists able to inflict grievous harm, but also from rogue states bent on acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Referring specifically to Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, the president announced in his January 2002 State of the Union address that “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 terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred.” The United States would not stand still as the danger posed by this threat continued to grow. “Time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”¹⁵⁸

The identification of this threat—of this trinity of terrorists, tyrants, and technologies of mass destruction—represented a logical evolution of the president’s worldview. Whereas before the September 11 attacks terrorism was of little concern, afterwards Bush and his advisers absorbed the terrorist threat into their view of the security challenge confronting the United States and, indeed, the rest of the world. As one would expect from those with a state-centric view of international affairs, the administration argued that tyrants—and not terrorists or technology—were the key to the new threat. Thus, Cheney, in making the case for going to war against Iraq, argued that “we have to be prepared now to take the kind of bold action . . . with respect to Iraq in order to ensure that we don’t get hit with a devastating attack when the terrorists’ organization gets married up with a rogue state that’s willing to provide it with the kinds of deadly capabilities that Saddam Hussein has developed and used over the years.”¹⁵⁹

With tyrants as the core of the post-September 11 threat, regime change became the strategic essence of dealing with this threat. Only when tyrants no longer ruled could the United States have confidence that states like Iraq, Iran, and North Korea would not seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction or make common cause with the terrorists. In some cases, regime change might be accomplished through concerted pressure along the lines of the cold war strategy of containment. In others, regime change could come from below, as the masses rise up to oust their dictatorial rulers. But in most case logic pointed to the need to overthrow these regimes forcefully—and preferably before the threat had been fully realized. Hence the doctrine of preemption. As the Bush *National Security Strategy* concluded, “Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first.”¹⁶⁰

The strategic innovation of the “axis of evil” speech and subsequent statements was in many ways profound. In one fell swoop, the Bush administration had abandoned a decades-long consensus that put deterrence and containment at the heart of American—and transatlantic—foreign policy. “After September the 11th, the doctrine of containment just doesn’t hold any water,

as far as I'm concerned," Bush explained in early 2003.¹⁶¹ But did this mean that the United States would henceforth strike first—that it had in effect declared war against each and every rogue state? Some abroad clearly thought so. French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine complained that U.S. foreign policy had become "simplistic," and EU External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten criticized the White House for going into "unilateralist overdrive."¹⁶² The administration, however, quickly argued that military force was not the preferred means for dealing with rogue threats in most instances. Thus, Powell told Congress two weeks after the president's "axis of evil" speech that, with respect to Iran and North Korea, "there is no plan to start a war with these nations. We want to see a dialogue. We want to contain North Korea's activities with respect to proliferation, and we are going to keep the pressure on them. But there is no plan to begin a war with North Korea; nor is there a plan to begin a conflict with Iran."¹⁶³

Iraq, though, was different. It clearly was of grave concern. But why? North Korea and Iran had more advanced nuclear programs, Pyongyang possessed large stocks of chemical and biological weapons and had emerged over the years as a proliferator of the first order, and Iran's support for terrorism was both significant and long-standing. In contrast, Iraq's nuclear program had been dismantled and its chemical and biological weapons program had been set back by UN inspectors in the 1990s, there was no evidence that Baghdad had proliferated any of its weapons or capabilities to others, and its direct sponsorship of terrorism had waned. And, yet, within months after the September 11 attacks, Iraq emerged as the administration's principal concern.

Iraq became the priority for the Bush administration for essentially four complementary reasons. First, many senior administration officials came to office intent on toppling Saddam. Most had served in the administration of George H.W. Bush. In retrospect, they regarded the February 1991 decision not to march on Baghdad to have been a major mistake. Some (like Wolfowitz) had arrived at this belief early on; others (including Dick Cheney) only did so later.¹⁶⁴ By the late 1990s, a consensus on the need for Saddam's removal had gelled, and many of those who would reach high office in the current administration advocated such a course in a January 1998 letter to President Bill Clinton.¹⁶⁵ While many of these officials pushed the Iraq issue prior to September 11, Bush became receptive to their arguments only when the full carnage of an attack on the United States became evident. As Bush explained, "the strategic view of America changed after September the 11th. We must deal with threats before they hurt the American people again. And as I have said repeatedly, Saddam Hussein would like nothing more than to use a terrorist network to attack and to kill and leave no fingerprints behind."¹⁶⁶

Second, Bush and several of his advisers evidently believed from the start that Saddam Hussein had a hand in the September 11 attacks. In public the president denied suggestions of a link between Al Qaeda and Iraq. "I can't make that claim," he replied when asked about it.¹⁶⁷ In private, though, he said otherwise. "I believe Iraq was involved," Bush told his advisers on September 17, 2001.¹⁶⁸ Among Bush's advisers, Wolfowitz pushed the Iraq connection from day one, basing his argument in part on the belief that Baghdad had been behind the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.¹⁶⁹ Bush apparently sympathized with Wolfowitz's argument but ultimately decided to focus first on Afghanistan. "I'm not going to strike them [the Iraqis] now. I don't have the evidence at this point."¹⁷⁰ He did, however, direct the Pentagon in the same September 17 "top secret" memorandum that outlined plans for a war with Afghanistan to begin planning options for an invasion of Iraq.¹⁷¹

Third, the administration decided to focus on Iraq because it appeared to believe Saddam could be ousted with relative ease. Iran, with three times the population of Iraq and broader public support, would be a major military undertaking. North Korea possibly possessed a nuclear weapon, and in any event, it effectively held South Korea hostage against an American attack. In contrast, Iraq's army was believed to be much weaker following its defeat in the Gulf War and the twelve years of sanctions that followed. In the meantime, U.S. military might had grown much strong, as demonstrated in the easy victories against Serbia and Afghanistan. Moreover, Baghdad had few friends—and none that was expected to help it if the United States attacked.

Finally, regime change in Iraq would give the president what he and several of his advisers most wanted: the opportunity for a grand strategic play, the type that establishes presidential reputations. As he said publicly on the eve of war, Bush believed that liberating Iraq could transform the Middle East by ushering in democratic governments throughout the region—making it less-fertile ground for terrorists and possibly even creating stronger allies for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁷² The White House hoped that, much as Ronald Reagan is remembered as the president who won the cold war, George W. Bush would be remembered as the president who brought democracy and peace to the Middle East. Such an achievement would not only secure another term in office, but would also help secure a familial success given that Bush's father had started the confrontation with Iraq and a Middle East peace process that his son would then complete.

For all these reasons, Iraq became the first part of the axis to which the United States turned.

The Inevitable War

Bush came to the conclusion that Saddam Hussein represented an intolerable threat that had to be removed shortly after the September 11 attacks. “The strategic vision of our country shifted dramatically,” he later explained, “because we now recognize that oceans no longer protect us, that we're vulnerable to attack.”¹⁷³ This sense of vulnerability became particularly acute the month following the attacks. In early October, the first of at least five envelopes containing deadly anthrax was opened at news organizations in New York and Miami. Additional mailings were sent to Capitol Hill later that month. At the same time, intelligence reports reached the White House that Al Qaeda might launch an even more spectacular attack, possibly by exploding a “dirty bomb,” or radiological weapon, in Washington, D.C. Twice that month, the Attorney General and FBI Director went on national television to alert the nation of possible follow-on attacks.

The high state of national anxiety was also felt in the White House, including by Bush himself, who was especially worried about the possibility of a dirty bomb attack.¹⁷⁴ Fright turned into a determination to make sure that, as president, Bush would do everything he could to prevent the next attack. And since Saddam Hussein had long pursued weapons of mass destruction, since he had used them before, since he had refused to give them up even after a war and twelve years of sanctions costing him hundreds of billions of dollars, and since he had actively supported terrorism, dealing with Iraq became critical to America's security. “The attacks of September 11, 2001, showed what the enemies of America did with four airplanes,” Bush maintained. “We will not wait to see what terrorists or terrorist states could do with weapons of mass destruction. We are determined to confront threats wherever they arise. I will not leave the American people at the mercy of the Iraqi dictator and his weapons.”¹⁷⁵

By late 2001, when the Taliban had been successfully ousted and Afghanistan had been freed from the chokehold Al Qaeda had held on that country, Iraq moved to the top of Bush's foreign policy agenda. The first public inkling of this decision came in Bush's the State of the Union address of January 2002, in which Bush promised to deal with the threat posed by the "axis of evil" and singled out Iraq for particular opprobrium. By March 2002, Bush had made up his mind. "F___ Saddam. We're taking him out," Bush told Rice as he poked his head in her office during a meeting she was having with three senators on what to do about Iraq.¹⁷⁶ In the months ahead, the administration repeatedly—often bluntly—made the case for getting rid of Saddam. Even as many major allies disagreed, the administration stood its ground, certain both of the danger Saddam represented and of the need to force his ouster as the best way to deal with that danger. "The fact of the matter is for all or most of the others who are engaged in this debate, they don't have the capability to do anything about it anyway," Cheney explained.¹⁷⁷ And if in the short term relations with key allies and the functioning of key institutions were damaged as Washington forged ahead in confronting Saddam, that was a price well worth paying. For in the long run, Cheney assured, "a good part of the world, especially our allies will come around to our way of thinking."¹⁷⁸

An Aspiration, Not a Strategy

The ouster of Saddam Hussein—or "regime change," as the parlance would have it—was an aspiration widely shared within the administration, and indeed beyond. But there were significant differences over the best strategy to achieve this outcome. Cheney and Rumsfeld believed from the start that military force was the only way to overthrow Saddam's regime—though in the flush of seemingly easy victory in Afghanistan they believed that the combination of precision airpower, local opposition forces, and a small number of U.S. ground troops would suffice to force Saddam from power. Powell in contrast, believed that with a united international community and a credible threat to use force, Baghdad could be disarmed of his weapons of mass destruction—significantly lessening the threat and ultimately weakening Saddam sufficiently to ensure his overthrow by indigenous forces.

There were also differences about the purpose to be served by Saddam's ouster. Assertive nationalists like Cheney and Rumsfeld argued that the removal of an evil regime and Iraq's disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction would eliminate a significant threat to regional stability and American security. They worried less about what would happen to Iraqi society once these major security objectives had been accomplished. In contrast, democratic imperialists like Wolfowitz looked toward the democratization of Iraq as a major step toward transforming the greater Middle East. Their view was that American security is ultimately guaranteed not just by the removal of threats, but by supporting the emergence of a world in which America's values and principles are as widely shared as possible.¹⁷⁹

Bush did not initially show his hand for much of this internal debate—and when he did he was as likely to side with one view as the other. The result was a great deal of tactical and strategic confusion. Tactically, the administration displayed little awareness of how it could get from a statement of policy (the "axis of evil" speech) to securing Saddam Hussein's ouster from power. In the days and weeks after Bush's speech, there were no policy initiatives to turn word into deed. Cheney traveled to the Middle East in March in an attempt to enlist Arab support for confronting Iraq, but his meetings were dominated instead by the escalating conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. That issue stayed in the headlines throughout the spring. The administration was deeply divided over whether to support the Israeli government's attempt to suppress suicide

bombers and other forms of terrorism or to become more heavily involved in a mediating role designed to address the underlying causes of violence. Debate on the issue was only settled in late June when Bush announced that any American involvement in the peace process was possible only after the Palestinians had chosen a new leadership “not compromised by terror.”¹⁸⁰

The sense of drift continued throughout most of the summer of 2002. The president had already decided that Saddam had to go, but only a few senior advisers apparently knew the decision had been made. Most of the administration was in the dark. Richard N. Haass, the director of policy planning at the State Department and a close confidant of Secretary Powell, met with Rice during the first week of July as part of regular series of meetings they held to discuss world events and administration policy. Haass asked whether Iraq really should be front-and-center in the administration’s foreign policy. Rice responded that the decision had in fact been made.¹⁸¹

Even as it slowly became clear within the administration that Saddam’s ouster was a top priority, there were sharp divisions on how to achieve the goal. Powell believed that war could still be avoided if Baghdad were presented with a credible threat that its only alternative to war was to readmit UN inspections and destroy its weapons of mass destruction. As he later recalled, “there was a realistic chance that it could have worked, if [Saddam] realized the seriousness of the president’s intent.”¹⁸² Powell made his case for coercive diplomacy in a private dinner with Bush and Rice in early August. He argued that by going to the United Nations the United States would be able to gain broad international support for the resumption of beefed up inspections and, if necessary, for war.¹⁸³

The administration’s assertive nationalists, with Cheney in the lead, made the opposite case. They argued that inspections would fail. Worse, Cheney maintained in a major speech in late August, they “would provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow ‘back in his box.’” Saddam Hussein was bent on acquiring nuclear weapons, and once he did, he “could then be expected to seek domination of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion of the world’s energy supplies, directly threaten America’s friends throughout the region, and subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail.”¹⁸⁴ The conclusion was unmistakable: Saddam had to be taken out before he succeeded in his ambitions. There was little time to waste.

With the debate spilling out in public, Bush was forced to decide. This he did in early September, when he essentially decided to take Powell’s route to Cheney’s goal. He went to the United Nations and challenged the members to stand up to Iraq by enforcing the numerous Security Council resolutions passed over the preceding twelve years. “All the world now faces a test, and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment. Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”¹⁸⁵ It was a bold speech, and a bold challenge to the world community. It was nevertheless received with great relief by most countries. The United States had decided to work through the United Nations rather than alone.

Despite the speech’s boldness, the administration had no strategy for turning its challenge to the world into a workable policy. The administration had not decided whether to seek a new Security Council resolution, or what a resolution might say if one were needed. When Iraq predictably reacted to Bush’s speech by announcing that UN inspectors could return “unconditionally,” Washington was caught off guard.¹⁸⁶ It took weeks before the administration finally decided to propose another resolution, and many more weeks before it negotiated a text

acceptable to all the members of the Security Council—most of which in the interim had come to doubt Washington's sincerity in seeking the peaceful disarmament of Iraq.

The unanimous passage of UN Security Council resolution 1441 on November 8, 2002, proved to be the high water mark of U.S. diplomacy. After eight weeks of often intense and difficult negotiation, the administration had persuaded a unanimous Council to declare Iraq in material breach of its international obligations, create a tough new inspection regime to determine whether Baghdad had disarmed, and warn that there would be “serious consequences” if Iraq failed to comply fully and completely. Yet, after having invested so much in getting the resolution passed, the administration once again failed to anticipate the many pitfalls sure to arise once the provisions of 1441 were implemented. To get agreement on the resolution, Washington had had to settle for terms that were subject to differing interpretation.¹⁸⁷ More important, there was no agreement within the Council on how much Iraqi cooperation would be enough to avoid war—nor on how much noncooperation would provoke it. The Bush administration itself may have been divided on this score. Whatever the reason, it had not contingency strategies in place for the moment when these different interpretations would come to the fore.

The cost of failing to think ahead became apparent early in 2003. In January, Dr. Hans Blix, the chief of the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), reported to the Security Council on Iraq's willingness to comply with the weapons inspections that had resumed two months earlier. He surprised most observers by bluntly criticizing Baghdad's halting cooperation. “Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament which was demanded of it.”¹⁸⁸ Despite suggestions that it move quickly to exploit the opening Blix had provided by introducing a second resolution that would lay out the key disarmament tasks, set a clear deadline (of, say, mid-March), and authorize the use of force if Baghdad failed to comply, the administration hesitated.¹⁸⁹ While the White House debated what to do, Blix returned to the Security Council for a second time in February with a more optimistic report. The political momentum that Washington enjoyed only weeks earlier immediately switched to the bloc of member states, led by France and Germany, that opposed war. By the time the administration finally moved in early March to introduce a new resolution declaring that Iraq had failed to grasp its final opportunity to disarm under Resolution 1441, it was too late. Only four countries, including the United States, publicly supported the administration's policy.

So the United States went to war against Iraq on March 19, 2003, without the explicit backing of the UN Security Council. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that there is nothing the Bush administration could have done to avoid this outcome. France, Germany, Russia, China, and Syria all adamantly opposed war, and the United States could count only on the support of Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria. But then again, a more vigorous diplomacy and greater tactical acumen might have succeeded in gaining consensus of the Council—or at least of a large majority of its members. Failing that, the effort would likely have had the political benefit of isolating those that were unalterably opposed, instead of isolating Washington, as turned out to be the case. The cost and possible future consequences of this international isolation are still to be sorted out.

The Other Evil States

Even as Iraq became Bush's priority in late 2001, Iran and North Korea—the other two members of the axis of evil—were emerging in some ways as more immediate threats. In summer 2002, the intelligence community concluded that Pyongyang had secretly embarked on an effort to

enrich uranium, violating its 1994 pledge to freeze its nuclear weapons program.¹⁹⁰ Once it admitted to the illicit program in early October, North Korea moved swiftly to put itself on a path to a viable nuclear weapons program. In December, it ordered the three International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to leave the country, shut down cameras monitoring the nuclear complex in Yongbyon, and removed IAEA seals in nuclear facilities. In January, Pyongyang announced it had withdrawn from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), restarted its small research reactor, and began removing spent nuclear fuel rods for likely reprocessing into weapons-grade plutonium. Should reprocessing start, North Korea has the capacity to produce about six bombs' worth of plutonium in as many months—effectively increasing its possible nuclear stockpile three- to six-fold.¹⁹¹

Meanwhile, Iran was not sitting still either. In August 2002, an opposition group revealed the existence of two Iranian nuclear facilities—one to produce heavy water and the other to enrich uranium. In early 2003, Iranian authorities admitted the existence of these facilities and invited the IAEA to inspect both as it is required to do under its NPT obligations. Inspections confirmed that two facilities would enable Iran to complete the nuclear fuel cycle, thus giving it an indigenous capacity to produce nuclear weapons. Given that there is no peaceful reason for Iran to possess either facility (Russia has promised to fuel its only civilian reactor indefinitely) as well as Tehran's failure to declare the facilities to the IAEA before beginning construction (as is required under its safeguards agreement with the IAEA), there is little doubt that Iran has embarked on a program that will enable it to produce nuclear weapons in a very few years.¹⁹²

Neither development came as a surprise to the Bush administration. Yet, for all the administration's rhetoric about the importance of not permitting "the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons," it chose to downplay the immediacy of the threat both countries' nuclear ambitions pose to U.S. security. Iraq remained front and center in the administration's foreign policy. And while the administration may be looking to use the credibility it hopes to gain from a successful war with Iraq to confront Pyongyang and Tehran, in the meantime it was prepared to largely ignore the development of threats that in most ways were more dangerous, more immediate, and more challenging.

This strategy became most evident in the case of North Korea, which through its dangerous actions essentially dared the administration to respond—but to little avail. While top administration officials and their supporters warned about the catastrophic threat a nuclear Iraq might pose years hence, all of them were either silent or dismissive of the nuclear threat North Korea posed in 2003.¹⁹³ One such hawk, Charles Krauthammer, even called for a policy of "temporary appeasement"—offering negotiations and economic and diplomatic blandishment to win time for a more confrontational policy once the war in Iraq was won.¹⁹⁴ The administration itself went out of its way to deny there might be any urgency in dealing with the North Korean nuclear threat. It deliberately delayed publishing Pyongyang's admission to U.S. officials of its illicit enrichment program until after Congress voted in October 2002 to authorize war with Iraq. It rejected any suggestion that what was happening constituted a "crisis." It refused to draw clear red lines because, as one senior administration official told the *New York Times*, "the problem with a red line is that North Korea will walk right up to it."¹⁹⁵ It declined to engage with Pyongyang in direct negotiations, arguing that this was a "regional issue" that was best handled within multilateral forums—ad hoc, the IAEA, or the Security Council.¹⁹⁶ And it even suggested that Pyongyang's nuclear threat was less significant than many thought. "You can't eat plutonium," Powell said in dismissing the threat.

“Yes, they have had these couple of nuclear weapons for many years, and if they have a few more, they have a few more, and they could have them for many years.”¹⁹⁷

The Bush administration was similarly silent about Iranian nuclear developments. This in part reflected its need for Tehran’s cooperation in the war with Iraq. But the silence also reflected a belief that the United States needed a different strategy for dealing with Iran different than with Iraq, or possibly even North Korea. Iran offered the hope for regime change from below. It had a large population of young people yearning to be free from the strictures of the religious fundamentalists who seized power nearly a quarter century ago. Beginning in the mid-1990s large majorities had begun voting in favor of reformist leaders opposed to the ayatollahs who still held tightly onto the reins of power. In July 2002, the administration finally abandoned hope of a possible rapprochement with reformist leaders, including Iran’s President Mohammed Khatami, and instead openly sided with the people against their rulers. “We have made a conscious decision to associate with the aspirations of the Iranian people,” said a senior administration official briefing on the new policy. “We will not play, if you like, the factional politics of reform versus hard-line.”¹⁹⁸ But as with so many other aspects of its foreign policy, the Bush administration did not have a strategy for turning another worthwhile aspiration into reality.

Conclusion

The September 11 attacks in New York and Washington had a significant impact on America and the Bush administration. They did not, however, transform the Bush’s foreign policy as many at first thought would be the case. The attacks did not lead President Bush and his advisers to reevaluate their view of the world and America’s role in it. Rather, they saw the horrors in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania as affirming their conviction that this dangerous world could be made secure only by the confident application of American power, especially its military power. If before September 11, it was still possible to debate the nature of the threat to national and international security, after America was attacked there was no doubt about the threat and America’s purpose. As a top national security official in the White House told the *Washington Post*:

A few years ago, there were great debates about what would be the threats of the post-Cold War world, would it be the rise of another great power, would it be humanitarian needs or ethnic conflicts. And I think we now know: The threats are terrorism and national states with weapons of mass destruction and the possible union of those two forces. It’s pretty clear that the United States is the single most powerful country in international relations for a very long time. . . . [It] is the only state capable of dealing with that kind of chaotic environment and providing some kind of order. I think there is an understanding that that is America’s responsibility, just like it was America standing between Nazi Germany and a takeover of all of Europe.¹⁹⁹

The Bush administration is right to see the trinity of terrorists, tyrants, and technologies of mass destruction as the principal threat to American security. But the strategy it has adopted for dealing with this threat—the focus on tyrants and the emphasis on regime change, forcibly if necessary—is misplaced. To believe that states remain not just the primary, but the only relevant actors in international affairs is to ignore the vast changes in world politics that globalization has

wrought. No doubt, a transnational network like Al Qaeda benefits from state support whenever that is provided. But its power reaches beyond the state and its existence does not depend on direct state support. If anything, terrorist networks like these thrive on the weakness and failure of states rather than on their strength—a conclusion George Bush has himself acknowledged.²⁰⁰ The defeat of tyrants and regime change in rogue states, while perhaps helpful, is therefore no guarantee that terrorists will be significantly weakened.

Similarly, the problem of weapons of mass destruction (to include their possible acquisition by terrorists) is one that goes well beyond rogue states. Globalization has contributed to the wide diffusion of technology and technical knowledge so that many forms of mass destruction are today more readily available than in the past. Given their dual-use nature, many chemicals and dangerous pathogens can be openly acquired and the technological expertise necessary to turn these materials into potentially dangerous weapons is widespread. Moreover, the vast weapons hangover from the cold war—including the many thousands of tons of fissile material, chemical agents, and biological toxins—is stored throughout Russia, mostly without adequate security. These stores are quite easily stolen by, diverted, or sold to those who are up to no good. Again, regime change in rogue states may help stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but it is hardly a sufficient response for dealing with the threat that these weapons and capabilities pose—whether wielded by terrorists or states.

Finally, the Bush administration has overestimated how much America's power can accomplish on its own. That America is powerful and that its power can be useful—even decisive—in many instances is beyond dispute. But just because you have a big hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail—or that hitting hard does not come with unexpected costs. Moreover, some of the most difficult problems cannot be resolved by even the biggest hammer. Take weapons proliferation. If countries around the world were to abandon their export control policies, nuclear and other technologies of mass destruction would become even more widely available. Or consider the problem of terrorism — and what would happen if key allies in the fight against terrorism were to halt exchanging information or end cooperation in law enforcement. Our ability to penetrate terrorist networks and pursue many of the key leaders would be fatally undermined.

The Bush administration will argue that international cooperation on terrorism, proliferation, and other crucial matters will be forthcoming so long as it serves the interests of all those cooperating. And such interest in cooperation is unlikely to be affected by the confident exercise of American power. But what if this calculation is wrong? Arrogance, George Bush warned when he was still a candidate, breeds resentment of the United States among other nations. Such resentment was initially slow to emerge, especially after the large degree of international sympathy that followed the September 11 attacks. But once the Iraq debate heated up in summer 2002, distrust and resentment of the United States grew ever stronger abroad. Elections in Germany and South Korea—two of America's most loyal allies—turned crucially on distrust of the Bush administration. Washington's failure to convince a majority on the Security Council, let alone many of its key allies, of the wisdom of its chosen course on Iraq resulted in its gravest diplomatic defeat ever. The administration's contortions to demonstrate that the war on Iraq was being fought by a broad and diverse "coalition"—including powerhouses such as Macedonia, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands—only helped to underscore its international isolation.²⁰¹ All of this is reflected in the precipitous drop in foreign opinion of the United States—with America's favorability rating dropping by more than a third in Britain and Poland and by more than half in France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Turkey in less than one year.²⁰²

The long-term consequences of the arrogant manner in which the Bush administration has employed its power remain to be determined. It may be that national interests will drive other nations to follow America's lead in the important fight against terrorism, rogue states, and weapons of mass destruction and that the United States will be welcomed even if does not act as the humble nation candidate Bush suggested it should. But, then again, it may be the case that Bush was right then and wrong now. Too often, the administration behaves as "the SUV of nations," as Mary McGrory put it. "It hogs the road and guzzles the gas and periodically has to run over something—like another country—to get to its Middle Eastern filling station."²⁰³ At some point, other countries may decide they have had enough, band together, and refuse to follow America's lead. Some may even actively oppose America's chosen course. At that point, America will stand all alone—a powerful pariah state that, in many instances, will prove unable to achieve its most important goals.

Notes

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² Warren Hoge, “Other Nations Regard the Campaign with Interest and Wonder,” *New York Times*, November 6, 2000, p. 6.; and James Traub, “W.’s World,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001, p. 28.

³ Quoted in John Young, “Quick, Bush, Give Reporters Some Other Substance to Rreport,” Cox News Service, August 26, 1999.

⁴ See John Lancaster and Terry M. Neal, “Heavyweight ‘Vulcans’ Help Bush Forge a Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post*, November 19, 1999, p. A2.

⁵ Robert Gallucci, the dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, quoted in Traub, W.’s World,” p. 31.

⁶ “In Interview, a Little Help on Chechnya,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 2003, p. A34.

⁷ Terry M. Neal, “Bush Falters in Foreign Policy Quiz,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 1999, p. A2.

⁸ Quoted in David France, “George W. Bush: Who is the Real Man in this Picture?,” *Glamour*, vol. 98 (June 2000), p. 256.

⁹ See George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (New York; William Morrow, 1999), pp. 185-86.

¹⁰ Nicholas Lemann, “The Redemption,” *New Yorker*, January 31, 2000, p. 56.

¹¹ See James Bennett, “C.E.O., U.S.A.,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001. p. 24; and the comments of Robert Zoellick at “How George W. Bush Would Govern in Foreign Policy,” A Forum of the Transitions to Governing Project cosponsored by the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution, Washington, June 22, 2000 (<http://www.aei.org/events/eventID.276/transcript.asp> [April 2003]).

¹² Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, p. 97.

¹³ Quoted in Lemann, “The Redemption,” p. 63.

¹⁴ Governor George W. Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism,” Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California, November 19, 1999 (www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/wspeech.htm [accessed April 2003]).

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¹⁶ Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, p. 97.

¹⁷ “Transcript of President-elect Bush’s News Conference Naming Donald Rumsfeld as His Nominee to Be Secretary of Defense,” December 28, 2000 (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/elections/bushtext122800.htm [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁸ Quoted in Maureen Dowd, “Freudian Face-Off,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1999, p. 29.

¹⁹ “Transcript of President-elect Bush’s News Conference Naming Donald Rumsfeld as His Nominee to Be Secretary of Defense,” December 28, 2000 (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/elections/bushtext122800.htm [accessed April 2003]).

²⁰ “The First 2000 Gore-Bush Presidential Debate: October 3, 2000” (www.debates.org/pages/trans2000a.html [accessed April 2003]).

²¹ Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, pp. 3, 26.

²² Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, p. 123.

²³ Quoted in Bennet, “C.E.O., U.S.A.,” p. 27.

²⁴ See for example, Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 137.

²⁵ On the triumph of Wilsonianism in American thought, see Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-First Century* (Public Affairs, 2002).

²⁶ Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

²⁷ Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

²⁸ Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

²⁹ “The Second 2000 Gore-Bush Presidential Debate.” He also argued that non-intervention in Rwanda—even in hindsight—had been the right decision, and one he would again make. “Interview with George W. Bush,” ABC News *This Week with Sam Donaldson*, January 23, 2000.

³⁰ Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.” See also Condoleezza Rice, “Promoting a National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79 (January/February 2000), p. 46.

³¹ Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

³² Bush, “A Period of Consequences.”

³³ Bush did say immediately after the bombing of the Cole that “there must be a consequence.” Quoted in Ron Hitchens and Steven Thomma, “Mideast Violence Throws Gore and Bush Off Track,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 13, 2000, p. A3.

³⁴ Frank Bruni, “Bush Has Tough Words and Rough Enunciation for Iraqi Chief,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1999, p. A12.

³⁵ “The Second 2000 Gore-Bush Presidential Debate.”

³⁶ For a fuller description see Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, “Power and Cooperation: American Foreign Policy in an Age of Global Politics.” In Henry E. Aaron, James M. Lindsay, and Pietro S. Nivola, *Agenda for the Nation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

³⁷ Authorship of the 1992 defense planning document is commonly attributed to Wolfowitz. He says, however, that the paper had been prepared by a member of his staff and leaked to the *Times* before he read it. “Eliminating the Threat to World Security Posed by the Iraqi Regime and Halting the Torture, Imprisonment and Execution of Innocents,” Foreign Press Center Briefing, Washington, D.C., March 28, 2003 (fpc.state.gov/19202.htm [accessed April 2003]); and Lynn Sweet, “Why We Hit First in Iraq,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 6, 2003, p. 16.

³⁸ “Excerpts from Pentagon’s Plan: ‘Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival,’” *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, p. A14; and Patrick E. Tyler, “U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop,” *New York*

Times, March 8, 1992, p. A1. On the influence of this study on thinking in the younger Bush's administration, see Nicolas Lemann, "The Next World Order," *New Yorker*, April 1, 2002, pp. 41-44.

³⁹ Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, p. 239.

⁴⁰ Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism."

⁴¹ See for instance Nicholas Lemann, "The Quiet Man," *New Yorker*, May 7, 2001, pp. 56-71.

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⁴³ "Entretien avec Condoleezza Rice," *Politique Internationale*, no. 10 (Winter 2000-2001), p. 30.

⁴⁴ See for instance Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76 (January/February 1997), p. 50; Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman, eds., *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002); and Anne-Marie Slaughter, "The Real New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76 (September/October 1997), pp. 183-97.

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⁴⁶ Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," p. 54.

⁴⁷ George W. Bush, "A Period of Consequences," The Citadel, South Carolina, September 23, 1999 (www.citadel.edu/pao/addresses/pres_bush.html [accessed April 2003]).

⁴⁸ Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism."

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⁵⁰ Paul Wolfowitz, "Remembering the Future," *National Interest*, no. 59 (Spring 2000), p. XX.

⁵¹ Paul Wolfowitz, "Re-building the Anti-Saddam Coalition," *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 1997, p. A22.

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⁵³ Quoted in Tyler, "U.S. Strategy Plan."

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⁵⁵ Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," pp. 47-48.

⁵⁶ For unvarnished elaborations of this point of view, see John Bolton, "Should We Take Global Governance Seriously?" *Chicago Journal of International Law*, vol. 1 (Fall 2000), pp. 205-22; and Charles Krauthammer, "Arms Control: The End of an Illusion," *Weekly Standard*, November 1, 1999, pp. 21-27.

⁵⁷ Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism."

⁵⁸ Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," p. 62.

⁵⁹ Powell's relationship with the younger President Bush continued to be distant as of mid-2002. See Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 330.

⁶⁰ Johanna McGeary, "Odd Man Out," *Time Magazine*, September 10, 2001, p. 28.

⁶¹ Robert Kagan, "The Benevolent Empire," *Foreign Policy*, no. 111 (Summer 1998), p. 28. Paul Wolfowitz expressed this sentiment thus: "The way we define our interest there's a sort of natural compatibility between the United States and most countries in the world." See "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with the Los Angeles Times," April 29, 2002 (www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/t05092002_t0429la.html [accessed January 2003]).

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- ⁸² Quoted in Alan Sipress, "Bush Retreats From U.S. Role as Peace Broker," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2001, p. A1.
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¹⁵⁸ Bush, “State of the Union Address.”

¹⁵⁹ Cheney on NBC News’ *Meet the Press*, March 16, 2003.

¹⁶⁰ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 15.

¹⁶¹ “Press Conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair,” January 31, 2003 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030131-23.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁶² Hubert Védrine quoted in Suzanne Daley, “French Minister Calls U.S. Policy ‘Simplistic,’” *New York Times*, February 7, 2002, A14. Chris Patten quoted in Jonathan Freedland, “Breaking the Silence,” *Guardian*, February 9, 2002, p. 8.

¹⁶³ U.S. Senate Budget Committee. *Hearing with Secretary of State Colin Powell on the President’s Fiscal Year 2003 Budget Proposal*. 107th Cong., 12 February 2002. (www.fnsg.com [accessed April 2003])

¹⁶⁴ For Wolfowitz’s view, see Michael Elliott and James Carney, “First Stop, Iraq,” *Time*, March 31, 2003, p. 175. As for Cheney, he reportedly told a group of friends after the 2000 elections that the new team had a historic opportunity to reverse the mistake of having left Saddam in power. See Carla Anne Robbins and Jeanne Cummings, “How Bush Decided that Hussein Must Be Ousted From Atop Iraq,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 14, 2002, p. A1.

¹⁶⁵ Among the Bush administration officials signing the letter were: Richard Armitage, John Bolton, and Paula Dobriansky (now at State), Don Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Peter Rodman (now at Defense), and Elliott Abrams and Zal Khalilzad (now at the NSC). The text of the letter can be found at: www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm [accessed April 2003].

¹⁶⁶ “Press Conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair,” January 31, 2003 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030131-23.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁶⁷ “Press Conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair,” January 31, 2003.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 99. Bush repeated that sentiment on at least one other occasion. See also Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 167

¹⁶⁹ Elliott and Carney, “First Stop, Iraq,” p. 177.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 99.

¹⁷¹ Kessler, “U.S. Decision on Iraq has Puzzling Past,” p. A1.

¹⁷² George W. Bush, “Address on the Future of Iraq,” American Enterprise Institute, Washington, February 26, 2003 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁷³ “Press Conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair,” January 31, 2003.

¹⁷⁴ Robbins and Cummings, “How Bush Decided That Hussein Must Be Ousted”; and Susan Page, “Iraq Course Set from Tight White House Circle,” *USA Today*, September 11, 2002, p. A1.

¹⁷⁵ “President Bush Discusses Iraq in National Press Conference,” March 6, 2003 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-8.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁷⁶ Elliott and Carney, “First Stop, Iraq,” p. 173.

¹⁷⁷ NBC’s *Meet the Press*, March 16, 2003.

¹⁷⁸ CBS News’ *Face the Nation*, March 16, 2003.

¹⁷⁹ On these differences, see Daalder and Lindsay, “It’s Hawk vs. Hawk in the Bush Administration.”

¹⁸⁰ George W. Bush, “Address on New Palestinian Leadership,” Washington, DC, June 24, 2002 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁸¹ See Nicholas Lemann, “How It Came to War,” *New Yorker*, March 31, 2003, p. 39.

¹⁸² Richard Wolffe and Tamara Lipper, “Powell in the Bunker,” *Newsweek*, March 24, 2003, p. 31.

¹⁸³ Woodward, *Bush at War*, pp. 332-4.

¹⁸⁴ Dick Cheney, “Speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention,” August 26, 2002 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁸⁵ George W. Bush, “Address to the UN General Assembly,” New York, September 12, 2002 (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html [accessed April 2003]).

¹⁸⁶ Julia Preston and Todd S. Purdum, “U.N. Inspectors Can Return Unconditionally, Iraq Says,” *New York Times*, September 17, 2002, p. A1.

¹⁸⁷ See Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, “UN’s Iraq Vote Sets Stage for More Friction,” *San Jose Mercury News*, November 11, 2002, p. 1P; and William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “The U.N. Trap?” *Weekly Standard*, November 18, 2002, pp. 9-12.

¹⁸⁸ Hans Blix, “An Update on Inspection,” Report of the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC to the United Nations Security Council, January 27, 2003 (www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/recent%20items.html [April 2003]).

¹⁸⁹ For one such proposal, see Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, “Iraq’s Chances Are Slipping Away,” *Newsday*, January 28, 2003, pp. A27-28.

¹⁹⁰ David E. Sanger, “North Korea Says It Has a Program on Nuclear Arms,” *New York Times*, October 17, 2002, p. A1. See also, Walter Pincus, “N. Korea’s Nuclear Plans Were No Secret,” *Washington Post*, February 2, 2003, p. A1.

¹⁹¹ Robert S. Norris, et al., “NRDC Nuclear Notebook: North Korea’s Nuclear Program, 2003,” in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March/April 2003), p. 75.

¹⁹² See IISS, “Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions,” *Strategic Comments*, vol. 9, no 2 (March 2003).

¹⁹³ Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, "Where Are the Hawks on North Korea," *American Prospect*, February 2002, pp. 27-8.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Krauthammer, "A Place for *Temporary* Appeasement," *Washington Post*, March 7, 2003, p. A33.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in David E. Sanger, "U.S. Sees Quick Start of North Korea Nuclear Site," *New York Times*, March 1, 2003, p. A9.

¹⁹⁶ "Presidential News Conference," March 6, 2003
(www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-8.html [accessed March 2003])

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in James Dao, "Powell Seeks Asian Response for New U.S.-Backed Resolution," *New York Times*, February 23, 2003, p. 13. See also Colin L. Powell, "Interview on NBC's Meet the Press with Tim Russert" (www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2002/16240.htm [April 2003]).

¹⁹⁸ Quoted in Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Halts Overtures to Iran's Khatami," *Washington Post*, July 23, 2002, p. A1.

¹⁹⁹ Quoted in Jackson Diehl, "The Accidental Imperialist," *Washington Post*, December 30, 2002, p. A17.

²⁰⁰ In the introduction to the *National Security Strategy*, Bush observes that the "events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders." See "Introduction," *National Security Strategy of the United States*.

²⁰¹ See Ivo H. Daalder, "Bush's Coalition Doesn't Add Up Where It Counts," *Newsday*, March 24, 2003, p. A16.

²⁰² "America's Image Further Erodes, Europeans Want Weaker Ties," Nine Country Survey by the Pew Center for the People and the Press, March 18, 2003 (<http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/175.pdf> [April 2003]).

²⁰³ Mary McGrory, "Pit-Stop Presidency," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2002, p. B7.