

Forging an American Empire

LAWRENCE J. KORB AND LAURA CONLEY

ALTHOUGH PRESIDENTIAL LEGACIES often become clear only in the long term, the historical analysis of George W. Bush's two terms in office will focus intently on the conduct and outcome of his foreign policy. The man who came to the Oval Office with a domestic policy agenda and no international experience will be remembered less for his attention to such initiatives as raising test scores or expanding trade liberalization than for taking the United States into wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, particularly the latter.

Bush's intense involvement in international politics was unexpected but necessary after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Less than ten months after coming into office, he ordered U.S. troops into Afghanistan; in early 2003 he sent them to Iraq. He argued that it was necessary to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein in order to prevent the dictator from using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against the United States or giving them to terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. The invasion and occupation provoked intense backlash and became Bush's most contentious policy.

Whether viewed through a realist or idealist lens, or a combination of both, foreign policy is a tool for furthering state interests. Thus, the evaluation of Bush's policy in this chapter will ask how effectively he defined and pursued the long-term foreign policy goals of the United States, and whether he adopted the appropriate tactical paths to advance the interests of the state. On balance, the chapter will argue that his presidency was marked by a lack of both strategic and tactical competence unprecedented in the nation's history.

As a comprehensive strategy document issued early in Bush's first term, the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) offers a good framework from which to judge Bush's competence in the execution of foreign policy. While an administration's outlook may change over time, the Global War on Ter-

ror (GWOT)—the major foreign policy thrust of the Bush presidency—has its foundations in this document. Therefore, it is logical to ask how effectively the administration accomplished the tactical goals set out in the NSS before questioning whether the administration's subsequent actions demonstrated long-term strategic competence.

As president, Bush used foreign policy primarily as a tool to sustain and increase a U.S. global preeminence that no longer exists. After 9/11 it should have been apparent that the United States would have to work multilaterally to guarantee its own security. The strategic environment that existed in the first decade after the Cold War had given way to a more dangerous and challenging situation, in which the United States would have to learn to work with other nations and deal effectively with rising powers and nonstate actors.

Bush dismissed this crucial change in the strategic environment and implemented a foreign policy predicated on the idea that protecting national security necessitated the unhindered projection of American power. Moreover, he defined power almost exclusively as hard power and consequently relied heavily on the military to carry out his policies, to the exclusion of other tools of statecraft. Ultimately, Bush overrode both allies and opponents in a vain effort to forge a new empire of American influence in the Middle East. In doing so, he made significant tactical errors, leading to devastating strategic failures.

FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Bush's foreign policy legacy is sharply bifurcated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11. While the first nine months of his presidency contained the philosophical underpinnings for his later actions, his engagement in the international arena was limited. He sought involvement in foreign affairs only when he believed it would strengthen national interest, and shied away from cooperation for the sake of multilateral gains. He consistently rejected international agreements with the potential to limit U.S. activities, and let lapse some of the key foreign policies of the previous administration.

As president-elect, Bush took a first definitive step toward rejecting international restrictions by stating that he had no intention of pursuing ratification of the International Criminal Court (ICC) treaty. Although

President Clinton had expressed some doubts about ratification, he had signed the treaty with faith that signatory status would allow the United States to shape the court in such a way as to avoid potential problems (Myers 2001). Bush did not see the same utility and withdrew before U.S. military forces could be subject to prosecution by an international court.

The ICC treaty was the beginning of a trend. Despite a campaign promise to regulate carbon dioxide emissions, Bush withdrew U.S. participation from the Kyoto Protocol (Ifill 2001). He also unsigned the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which had been signed by Clinton but not ratified by the Senate; rejected a draft agreement intended to give teeth to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention; and announced his intention to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to deploy a national missile defense system. Finally, Bush stepped back from Clinton's engagement with North Korea and the Middle East peace process. Together, these actions were indicative of his strong tendency to define the utility of foreign policy in terms of narrow national self-interest. The international consequences of nonparticipation were of secondary concern.

FOREIGN POLICY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

The events of 9/11 made it politically and strategically impossible for the Bush administration to remove itself from the international arena. However, the president's aversion to restrictive multilateral regimes did not diminish. In his first major post-9/11 action, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, this philosophy determined the composition of the mission. Bush conducted OEF as a loose coalition of troops rather than under the aegis of NATO or any other international organization. He did so even though NATO had invoked Article Five, the mutual defense clause of the Atlantic Treaty, for the first time in its history after 9/11 (Daley 2001). NATO later entered Afghanistan as the operator of the International Security Assistance Force, but the United States continued to maintain a separate command structure for some American troops until mid-2008, when NATO and American troops, with the exception of special operations forces, were placed under a single commander (Gilmore 2008).

The ad hoc coalition model was also Bush's instrument of choice in

Iraq. Although his administration initially involved the United Nations in assessing Iraq's alleged WMD capabilities, it quickly became apparent that international cooperation was of interest only if it did not hinder the push to remove Saddam Hussein. Indeed, Iraq had long been a priority for some top Bush advisors. During his confirmation, future deputy secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz stated frankly in regard to regime change in Iraq that "if there's a real option to do that, I would certainly think it's still worthwhile" (Ricks 2006, 27).

The war in Iraq was a policy failure from the beginning. The United States invaded with unrealistic expectations for the duration of the war and a "coalition of the willing" that was not large enough to confront the emergence of a multifaceted insurgency. More than five years after the invasion, American forces had dealt with multiple civil wars and suffered more than four thousand casualties, while coalition partners increasingly scaled back or removed their troop presence.

In making the decision to go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bush eschewed not only international restrictions but also disagreement and uncertainty at home. Indeed, his decision-making process, based on his "instinctive reactions," restricted negotiation and compromise (Woodward 2008, 431). Bob Woodward writes that after 9/11 Secretary Rice suggested that Bush try to assuage concerns about his Afghanistan policy among members of his war cabinet by asking for their opinions and ideas. Bush agreed to do so. However, at the meeting he "went around the table asking everyone to affirm allegiance to the plan" rather than opening the policy up to criticism. Indeed, once set on a decision, Bush would not waver. Woodward notes that in regard to the war in Iraq, Bush "had never questioned its rightness, and its rightness made it the only course" (432).

THE BUSH DOCTRINE

Bush's determination to avoid international restrictions is laid out most forcefully in the 2002 NSS. This document, which was reiterated in 2006, notes up front that although the United States will work with partners, its policies will be "based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests" ("National Security Strategy . . ." 2002, 1). As becomes apparent later in the document,

this uniquely Bush approach, which overturned fifty years of American practice, can lead to unilateral, preventive military action.

The NSS's overarching goal is to enable the United States to triumph over global threats and capitalize on its power and influence to usher in "decades of peace, prosperity, and liberty" ("National Security Strategy . . ." 2002, 1). Although these goals are not markedly different from past U.S. policy, they are a particularly blunt presentation of these intentions. The more controversial aspects of the policy are found in the tactical prescriptions offered to attain this new "Pax Americana." In particular, the strategy contains a number of concepts unique to the Bush administration's approach.

First, the NSS identifies terrorism and unstable, rogue regimes as singular, even existential threats to U.S. security. Second, it assumes that the United States will maintain military dominance into the foreseeable future as a bulwark against rival great powers and other threats. Third, it foresees that a coalition of powers will confront global threats, and that these same countries will recognize the legitimate right of the United States to lead this effort. Finally, the NSS outlines a plan to combat terrorism by pursuing the spread of political and economic openness around the world; in other words, by making the world democratic (Korb 2003, 16-18).

The section of the NSS that drew the most virulent criticism, however, even from America's closest allies, was Bush's declaration that the United States would "not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against . . . terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country" ("National Security Strategy . . ." 2002, 6). This statement, which was interpreted by some analysts as the basis of a new preventive-war "Bush doctrine," was reflected in the administration's willingness to invade Iraq over the objections of key allies and without a UN resolution.

Before launching the invasion, Bush made clear his impatience with international partners. He demanded that Hussein and his sons leave Iraq within forty-eight hours and remarked that "The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours" (Bush 2003). In his view, the international community was no longer needed to make American military action legitimate or lawful.

TACTICAL COMPETENCE

After years of the United States waging war in Afghanistan and Iraq, criticisms of Bush's tactical competence have emerged from foes and allies alike. Both L. Paul Bremer, the former U.S. head administrator in Iraq, and General Eric Shinseki, army chief of staff from 1999 to 2003, have criticized the Bush administration for entering Iraq with too few troops to stabilize the situation after the removal of the regime (Wright and Ricks 2004). A detailed view of Bush's tactical competence, encompassing five policy areas from the NSS, reveals a pattern of incompetent policy management, in which the struggle to subdue global terrorism and rogue regimes without international support has led to military, political, and diplomatic failures.

"Champion Aspirations for Human Dignity"

In the NSS, the Bush administration committed itself to safeguarding "the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity," among them "the rule of law, limits on the absolute power of the state" and "equal justice." It also contained a strong commitment to opposing any violations of these concepts through international forums ("National Security Strategy . . ." 2002, 3). Yet, after 9/11 the Bush administration began to systematically violate basic principles of equal justice. The inhumane treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib by U.S. forces, the application of enhanced interrogation techniques on suspects in U.S. custody, the rendition of prisoners to countries that routinely practice torture, and efforts by the Bush administration to deny detainees at Guantánamo the ability to challenge their detentions in court all undermined Bush's efforts to serve as a leader in this area.

The use of enhanced interrogation techniques on detainees was a particularly egregious tactical failure. The president and his staff claimed that nonroutine techniques were needed in order to gain information vital to national security. Such techniques included subjecting detainees to cold temperatures, head slapping, and waterboarding. The legitimacy of these operations was based on a 2002 Department of Justice memo, which argued that all interrogation techniques were legal unless they caused pain comparable to that experienced during organ failure (Shane et al. 2007). This unprecedented redefinition of U.S. human rights policy led to allegations

of possible torture from leading humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The United States' failure to lead by example was particularly devastating given the unconventional opponents that American forces were facing in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. Army and Marine Counterinsurgency Manual lays out the consequences of ceding the moral high ground in such a conflict, whether through torture or the denial of basic legal rights. The manual analyzes the experiences of French troops during the Algerian revolution, when torture was employed as a tactic to defeat the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). In that conflict, the "failure to comply with moral and legal restrictions against torture severely undermined French efforts and contributed to their loss despite several significant military victories" (Petraeus and Amos 2006, 7-9). A similar lesson was learned by the British government, which abandoned a policy of preemptively imprisoning suspected members of the Irish Republican Army in the 1970s after it became apparent "that this policy generated sympathy for the IRA and aided recruitment efforts" (Roth 2008, 9-16).

In the global war on terror, these tactics were similarly self-defeating. Former CIA officer Marc Sageman testified before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that although followers of radical Islam found much to dislike in the actions of the U.S. government prior to the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration's policies in the years following that event contributed to the radicalization of future jihadists. He argued that Muslims were reacting with moral outrage—one of four factors leading to radicalization—to the U.S. involvement in Iraq and the experiences of Muslims in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo (Sageman 2007). In allowing these abuses to proceed, Bush failed to uphold his own rhetorical commitment to equal justice. This glaring tactical failure strengthened the future ranks of the enemy he sought to defeat.

"Strengthen Alliances to Defeat Global Terrorism"

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States increasingly abandoned traditional alliances in favor of Bush's coalitions of the willing. Instead of partnering with others to develop a mutually acceptable and thus mutually actionable plan for combating terrorism, Bush sacrificed international

goodwill for control. This tendency was consistent with the NSS, in which the president declared that while the United States would need the help of allies to defeat terrorism, it reserved the freedom to act alone if necessary. This is ostensibly an uncontroversial statement, but under the Bush administration it became a tactically counterproductive policy of limited and conditional engagement.

Bush received widespread support for his initial efforts to pursue the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The most notable demonstration of this support came from NATO allies. However, the president opted to pursue the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan with limited assistance. While this decision ensured that even well-meaning allies would not interfere with U.S. command of the operation, it also meant that the United States would not receive the military and economic contributions of many countries that had offered assistance. The United States even blocked the deployment of a UN-authorized multinational force to Afghanistan in late 2001, until the British could assure that U.S. Central Command would control the forces (Ford 2001).

Bush's aversion to allowing other countries to restrain his antiterrorism policies also shaped the coalition for Iraq. Although the president initially took his case against Hussein to the UN Security Council, the invasion was conducted without the sanction of NATO or any other international institution. Certainly, Bush was capable of acting without such approval. However, in doing so, he damaged relations with longtime allies—particularly the French and the Germans, who his secretary of Defense branded “old Europe” for their lack of cooperation—and gave credence to criticism that his administration endorsed not only preemptive but also preventive war (Purdum 2003).

Bush's choice not to create a broad international consensus around American actions severely damaged U.S. standing in the world. In Turkey, a staunch NATO ally and bulwark against the spread of radicalism in the volatile Middle East, only 9 percent of citizens surveyed in 2007 held a favorable view of the United States. In the 1999–2000 survey, the United States had a 52 percent favorability rating in Turkey, which dropped to 30 percent by 2002. U.S. favorability in Germany sunk from 78 percent in 1999–2000 to 60 percent in 2002 and 30 percent in 2007 (Pew Global

Attitudes Project 2007). The NSS envisioned the United States “forging new, productive international relationships and redefining existing ones in ways that meet the challenges of the twenty-first century” (“National Security Strategy . . .” 2002, 7). Instead, Bush’s swift, nonnegotiable expansion of the American presence in the Middle East alienated key allies, further complicating his efforts to pursue terrorists and bring about peace and prosperity around the globe.

“Work with Others to Defuse Regional Conflicts”

In addition to outlining Bush’s intentions to work with allies to fight terrorism the NSS highlighted his commitment to work with other nations to address intractable regional conflicts in areas whose chronic instability could be fertile ground for breeding future terrorists. Among the hot spots Bush proposed to engage, the Israel-Palestine and India-Pakistan conflicts stand out as areas where he failed to follow through on his commitment to confront instability. Moreover, when Bush did get involved, he sacrificed opportunities to work for broad solutions in favor of pursuing short-term, individual priorities in the war on terror. Ironically, these missed opportunities undermined his efforts in that struggle as well.

As early as February 2001, when violence erupted between Israel and Palestine, Bush decided not to continue the negotiations begun between the parties under the previous administration. A State Department spokesman declared that “The ideas and parameters that were discussed in the last few months are—were—President Clinton’s parameters and, therefore, when he left office, they were no longer a US proposal or presidential proposal” (Goldenberg 2001). After 9/11, when Afghanistan and Iraq began to draw the administration’s full attention, the Israel-Palestine conflict, despite its prominence in the NSS and its fundamental relevance to the history of foreign involvement in the Middle East, was completely ignored.

In early 2002, when a Hamas suicide bombing prompted Israel to surround the compound of Palestinian prime minister Yasir Arafat, Bush sent Colin Powell to the region. However, Bush and his national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, rendered Powell ineffective by limiting his authority to pressure the involved parties (Bumiller 2007). Furthermore, Bush did not make any investment in peace between the parties until right before

his invasion of Iraq, when he acceded to British requests to give rhetorical support for a Middle East “road map” to peace. To initiate wars in Afghanistan and Iraq without having first made a serious and sustained commitment to alleviating hostilities between Arabs and Israelis was foolhardy at best and contrary to the policies of virtually all administrations of the past fifty years.

After 9/11, it became increasingly obvious that resolving regional conflicts was less important to the United States than unilaterally pursuing its efforts in the war on terror. Nowhere was this more blatant than in the administration’s policy toward Pakistan, where Bush’s engagement did not demonstrate a coherent approach to alleviating regional tensions, and may actually have aggravated them.

General Pervez Musharraf, the unelected president of Pakistan when the 2001 terrorist attacks occurred, quickly won the Bush administration’s support with his denunciations of terrorism and his initial assistance in capturing al-Qaeda operatives. However, Musharraf and his government failed to capture Osama bin Laden and his top assistant and did not assert sufficient authority over the volatile Federally Administered Tribal Areas to stop them from becoming a safe haven for jihadists. In fact, South Asia scholar Daniel Markey reports that early in the U.S.-Pakistan partnership, Musharraf’s government did not seriously pursue Taliban fighters in Pakistan “because some members of the military still viewed them as potentially valuable assets for projecting Pakistani influence into Afghanistan and because their long history of a close working relationship make it hard to cut ties overnight” (Markey 2007, 85–102). While Markey argues that the military may be amenable to a change of heart, Bush was unable to bring about such a change by the end of his presidency, even after Musharraf’s resignation.

Moreover, Bush’s approach to engaging with Pakistan did not seem to acknowledge that country’s longstanding conflict with India, which the NSS had sought to address. In July 2008, the administration foolishly proposed using almost \$230 million of its counterterrorism aid to Pakistan to upgrade the country’s fleet of F-16s, an aircraft more useful in Pakistan’s potential war with India than in counterinsurgency operations. In fact, from 9/11 to mid-2008 the U.S. government gave Pakistan

over \$10 billion in military aid. About half was designated for counterinsurgency efforts, although “congressional auditors have said that Pakistan did not spend much of that money on counterinsurgency” (Schmitt 2008). Additionally, the Bush administration maintained its close relationship with Musharraf even though Pakistan was known to use its allies in Afghanistan to strengthen its regional position against India. The revelation in August 2008 that the Pakistani intelligence service, the ISI, aided militants responsible for a suicide attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul is another example of the results of putting antiterrorism policies before the United States’ overall security interests.

Not only did the Bush administration provide aid to Pakistan without a reliable mechanism to ensure that the funds were used to support the war on terror, it also angered the Pakistanis by offering India a lucrative nuclear deal. This agreement, which was announced in 2005, proposed to allow India to acquire civilian nuclear technology from the United States, without requiring it to abandon its nuclear weapons programs or sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Pakistani government declared in July 2008 that the deal would set a precedent for further proliferation and would “increase the chances of a nuclear arms race in the sub-continent” (“International Agency . . .” 2008).

Although the Bush administration declared its intent to work with international partners to confront instability, the president’s single-minded focus on antiterrorism policies undermined his ability to address entrenched regional conflicts. Even for those countries with which Bush found it expedient to engage, the incoherence of his administration’s policies did little to resolve longstanding conflicts.

*“Prevent Our Enemies from Threatening Us . . .
with Weapons of Mass Destruction”*

The NSS committed Bush to preventing the proliferation of WMDs using a variety of tools, among them “diplomacy, arms control, multilateral export controls, and threat reduction assistance” in concert with like-minded partners (“National Security Strategy . . .” 2002, 14). North Korea proved to be a particular challenge to this goal and joined the club of nuclear powers during Bush’s time in office. While the failure to prevent this de-

velopment cannot be laid entirely at the president's feet, Bush's hard line on negotiations with North Korea during his first term was an ineffective method for dealing with the problem.

When Bush took office, North Korea's plutonium enrichment program was ostensibly frozen under the 1994 Agreed Framework negotiated by the Clinton administration. In late 2002, however, after the Bush administration refused to live up to the terms of the 1994 agreement and broke off talks, North Korea openly admitted to the United States that it was developing a nuclear program by enriching uranium. By October 2006, after resuming its plutonium enrichment program and expelling United Nations inspectors, the North was able to conduct its first nuclear weapons tests. The Bush administration's policy to address these developments suffered from a lack of attention and a preference for confrontational rhetoric over diplomatic engagement.

In the summer of 2002, before the North Koreans admitted to the existence of their nuclear program, they appeared ready to increase openness. They proposed a meeting between Secretary of State Colin Powell and the North Korean foreign minister. They also implemented some economic reforms and expressed willingness for high-level talks with South Korea. Rather than capitalizing on this moment of opportunity to open a dialogue with the North Koreans, which would have been supported by the South Korean government, Bush permitted Powell only a brief, informal conversation with the minister at an international conference (Laney and Shaplen 2003, 16–30).

A few months after having been roundly rejected by the West, the North Koreans announced the existence of their nuclear program and offered the United States a nonaggression pact. Again, the Bush administration rejected the overture, this time with retaliation. Bush stopped shipments of heavy fuel oil to the North, a move which prompted the North to announce that it would begin reprocessing spent nuclear fuel rods. The situation reached a crisis point in 2006 with North Korea's first nuclear test.

By 2006, the Bush administration was engaged in two wars that were not going well and was losing domestic support for its foreign policies. Therefore, following the nuclear test, Bush was left with no choice but to engage North Korea. In 2008, as a part of multilateral talks, the North

agreed to pursue disarmament in return for international aid. Whether this will reduce the nuclear threat will depend in large part on whether President Obama chooses to continue the policies of his predecessor or return to the approach of the Clinton administration.

Bush's largest nonproliferation success was Libya's decision to abandon its WMD programs in December 2003. While this was an encouraging development, it is not one for which the Bush administration can take full credit. The invasion of Iraq may have generated some pressure to disarm, but as Dafna Hochman points out in *Parameters*, the journal of the Army War College, the U.S. action in Iraq did not slow down any other known proliferation programs, and may actually have caused Iran and North Korea to accelerate their nuclear programs. Additionally, Libyan officials reportedly made an offer to disarm during secret talks with the Clinton administration in 1999 (Hochman 2006, 66). Thus, Bush's largest nonproliferation success might well have been built on the diplomacy of his predecessors.

*“Develop Agendas for Cooperative Action with
Other Main Centers of Global Power”*

Despite Bush's propensity for prioritizing U.S. antiterrorism goals over international alliances, the 2002 NSS did indicate a desire to pursue U.S. goals “by organizing coalitions—as broad as practicable—of states able and willing to promote a balance of power that favors freedom” (“National Security Strategy . . .” 2002, 25). The strategy placed a heavy emphasis on improving NATO's ability to take action but also indicated an interest in working with other emerging powers. In practice, however, the Bush administration's selective approach to international arrangements also marked its relationships with regional hegemons. Bush cooperated with countries willing to follow U.S. strategy and dismissed those who disagreed.

Although Iran is not mentioned in the NSS as a key country—indeed, no country in the Middle East is labeled as such—it is undoubtedly a significant actor in its region. However, Bush not only spent the better part of his presidency refusing to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear ambitions but put at risk the one area where Iran was willing to work with the United States: Afghanistan.

During the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Iran supported the U.S. cause in overturning the Taliban government and getting the Northern Alliance to support President Hamid Karzai. Iran also provided substantial reconstruction assistance after the Taliban were successfully ousted and Karzai took office (Montero 2006). Despite its contributions, Bush labeled the nation one of the axis of evil countries in January 2002, thus attempting to isolate Iran diplomatically and strategically.

When President Nixon went to China in 1972, he scored a diplomatic coup against the Soviet Union and reinvigorated diplomacy with a country that, though not a friendly ally, was undoubtedly a significant global power. Although the circumstances were not entirely analogous, Bush faced a similar situation in the Middle East. In the global war on terror the Bush administration confronted a new kind of enemy—stateless actors—whose allegiance was to ideology rather than nationality. By forming a working partnership, though not an alliance, with Iran, Bush could have found an ally against two common enemies, the Taliban and the regime of Saddam Hussein. Instead, he chose to alienate Iran and pursue American policies without compromise. Moreover, by removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, he increased permanently Iran's power and influence in the greater Middle East.

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

In the NSS, Bush made a commitment to pursue global security under American leadership. However, he approached this long-term, strategic goal under the assumption that security could only be guaranteed through military dominance and the creation of an informal empire of American influence in the greater Middle East. This vision led him to rely almost exclusively on military power to carry out his primary policy objective, winning the global war on terror.

Bush's short-term, tactical errors were numerous. In his pursuit of victory in the war on terror he alienated allies, undermined the U.S. human rights record, ignored potentially explosive regional conflicts, refused to negotiate with potential nuclear states, and antagonized rising world powers. However, his heavy focus on the military as the primary tool of statecraft and his belief in its ability to bring about long-term peace may

represent a greater foreign policy failure. As a strategic leader, he inflicted long-term damage on the U.S. military and set the United States on a path that could lead to failure in the war on terror.

In making the war in Afghanistan, and later the war in Iraq, the central efforts of the war on terror, Bush pushed the military almost to the breaking point. The all-volunteer force was not, as General John Abizaid, a former head of U.S. Central Command, noted, “built to sustain a long war” (Ryan 2006). By 2008, with the United States still fighting on both fronts, the truth of this statement became apparent. With both active duty forces and Army National Guard and Reserve units facing repeated deployments abroad, the U.S. Army saw desertion at its highest level since 1980 and suicide at its highest point in more than fifteen years. Soldiers consistently received less than the Department of Defense’s recommended two-to-one ratio of time at home to combat deployment, and the Bush administration’s efforts to increase the size of the ground forces were tardy at best. These increases, which were desperately needed to relieve the stress on U.S. armed forces, were relatively small additions that would not be completed until 2012.

The damaging effects of Bush’s policies on the military were compounded by the president’s failure to set the United States on the right path to fight the war on terror. Although Bush was widely supported in responding to the 9/11 attacks with military force, this is not the only, or the most effective, approach to fighting terrorism. In 2008, the RAND Corporation released a study of 648 terrorist groups in the second half of the twentieth century. The study’s authors posed a simple question: How do terrorist groups end? Through analysis of such diverse actors as al-Qaeda, the IRA, and the Khmer Rouge, they determined that the most common path to ending terrorism came through transitioning terrorists to legitimate political actors. This result occurred 43 percent of the time. In only 7 percent of the cases was military force the decisive factor in bringing terrorism to an end (Jones and Libicki 2008, 19).

While the RAND study is not a total condemnation of the policies of the Bush administration, it casts serious doubt on the president’s heavy reliance on military force as the primary instrument in the war on terror. In his pursuit of victory, Bush ignored the lessons of history. Instead of

bringing to bear American diplomatic, political, and cultural expertise to defeat al-Qaeda and put the United States on a path to productive global leadership, he staked the security of the American people and the lives of American troops on the instrument least likely to achieve his goals.

CONCLUSION

From his first days in office, President Bush was so confident in American power that he adopted a policy of dealing with international challenges unilaterally if he could, and multilaterally only if he had to. This was the exact opposite of all the American presidents since World War II. The approach, from Truman to Clinton, was multilaterally if we can, unilaterally only if we must. Many analysts had hoped that the attacks of 9/11 would compel Bush to change his approach, but this proved not to be the case.

Bush compounded the situation in two ways. First, he established a new international norm for using military force. Rather than using military force to respond to an attack or to deal with an imminent threat, he decided it was appropriate to wage a preventive war, that is, to use military power to deal with a future potential threat. This was the basis for his invasion and occupation of Iraq, a policy that ignored the traditional doctrine of leveraging military superiority for deterrence and containment.

Second, for too long he refused to negotiate directly with our potential adversaries, like Iran and North Korea, without preconditions that would have required them to undermine their leverage in the negotiations. Had his predecessors followed such a policy, it is unlikely that the United States and the Soviet Union would have concluded any arms control agreements, or that China would have cooperated with the United States against the Soviet Union.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security advisor during the Carter administration, has remarked that Bush's war in Iraq is a "historic, strategic, and moral calamity" and that U.S. policy in the Middle East demands a "strategy of genuinely constructive political engagement" (Brzezinski 2007). Had Bush begun his presidency, or even his response to 9/11, with such a commitment to cooperative diplomacy, his policies might not have failed strategically and tactically.

REFERENCES

- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. 2007. "SFRG Testimony." In *Securing America's Interests in Iraq: The Remaining Options. Iraq in the Strategic Context. Session 2*. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, 110th Congress, 1st Session, February 1. <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2007/BrzezinskiTestimony070201.pdf> (Accessed August 21, 2008).
- Bumiller, Elisabeth. 2007. "Rice's Turnabout on Mideast Talks." *New York Times*, November 26. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/26/washington/26rice.html> (Accessed 2008).
- Bush, George W. 2003. "President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours," March 17. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Daley, Suzanne. 2001. "After the Attacks: The Alliance; For First Time, NATO Invokes Joint Defense Pact with U.S." *New York Times*, September 13, p. A17.
- Ford, Peter. 2001. "Coalition Allies Lament: It's Still 'America First.'" *Christian Science Monitor*, December 27. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1227/p1153-wogn.html> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Gilmore, Gerry J. 2008. "Pentagon Proposes Change to U.S. Command Structure in Afghanistan." *American Forces Press Service*, August 8. <http://www.defenselink.mil/News/newsarticle.aspx?id=50748> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Goldenberg, Suzanne. 2001. "Bush Disowns Clinton Peace Proposals for Middle East." *Guardian*, February 10. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/feb/10/usa.israel> (Accessed 2008).
- Hochman, Dafna. 2006. "Rehabilitating a Rogue: Libya's WMD Reversal and Lessons for U.S. Policy." *Parameters* 36(1): 63-78.
- Illill, Gwen. 2001. "Bush and the Environment." *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, March 29. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/environment/jan-june01/bushenv_3-29.html (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- "International Agency Approves Nuclear Inspection Deal for India." 2008. *International Herald Tribune*, August 1. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/08/01/asia/india.php> (Accessed August 12, 2008).
- Jones, Seth G., and Martin C. Libicki. 2008. *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qaeda*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG741-1/> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Korb, Lawrence J. 2003. *A New National Security Strategy in an Age of Terrorists, Tyrants, and Weapons of Mass Destruction*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Laney, James T., and Jason T. Shaplen. 2003. "How to Deal with North Korea." *Foreign Affairs* 82(2): 16-30. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20030301faessay10336/james-t-laney-jason-t-shaplen/how-to-deal-with-north-korea.html> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Markey, Daniel. 2007. "A False Choice in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 86(4): 85-102. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070701faessay86407/daniel-markey/a-false-choice-in-pakistan.html> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Montero, David. 2006. "Iran, U.S. Share Afghan Goals." *Christian Science Monitor*, May 4. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0504/p06s02-wosc.html> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Myers, Steven Lee. 2001. "U.S. Signs Treaty for World Court to Try Atrocities." *New York Times*, January 1. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CB0D7153BF932A35752CoA9679C8B63> (Accessed 2008).
- "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America." 2002. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf> (Accessed August 20, 2008).

- Petraeus, David H., and James F. Amos. 2006. *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army. <http://usacac.army.mil/cac/repository/materials/coin-fm3-24.pdf> (Accessed August 22, 2008).
- Pew Global Attitudes Project. 2007. *Rising Environmental Concern in 47-Nation Survey: Global Unease with Major World Powers*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/256.pdf> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Purdum, Todd. 2003. "Threats and Responses: Washington; Rebuffing 2 Allies, U.S. Pushes Demand That Iraq Disarm." *New York Times*, January 24. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0CE1DC1639F937A15752C0A9659C8B63> (Accessed 2008).
- Ricks, Thomas. 2006. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York: Penguin.
- Roth, Kenneth. 2008. "After Guantanamo: The Case Against Preventive Detention." *Foreign Affairs* 87(3): 9–16. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080501facomment87302/kenneth-roth/after-guant-namo.html> (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Ryan, Kevin. 2006. "Stretched Too Thin." *Washington Post*, December 18, p. A25.
- Sageman, Marc. 2007. "Radicalization of Global Islamist Terrorists." In *Violent Islamic Extremism: The European Experience*. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. 110th Congress, 1st Session, June 27. http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/_files/062707Sageman.pdf (Accessed August 25, 2008).
- Schmitt, Eric. 2008. "Plan Would Use Antiterror Aid on Pakistani Jets." *New York Times*, July 24. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/24/world/asia/24pstan.html?scp=r&sq=&st=nyt> (Accessed August 2008).
- Shane, Scott, David Johnston, and James Risen. 2007. "Secret U.S. Endorsement of Severe Interrogations." *New York Times*, October 4. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/04/washington/04interrogate.html> (Accessed 2008).
- Woodward, Bob. 2008. *The War Within*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Wright, Robin, and Thomas E. Ricks. 2004. "Bremer Criticizes Troop Levels." *Washington Post*, October 5, p. A1.