

Candidate Bush to Incumbent Bush:  
Surface Changes, Core Consistency  
In His Foreign Policy

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For many generations of Americans, there is one major event that serves as a defining moment in national or world affairs. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are this generation's moment. Few Americans would say that they have not seen dramatic changes in their daily lives, political views, or perception of personal and national security. The events of 9/11 naturally had a particularly powerful effect on President George W. Bush and his administration's foreign policy. On a personal level, 9/11 forced Bush to turn more attention to foreign policy and to increase his knowledge about foreign affairs. Crucially, it also gave him a sense of mission and led him to a guiding policy doctrine. In policy areas, 9/11 changed U.S. foreign policy priorities. New challenges, like building an anti-terror coalition and overthrowing regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq came to the fore, while other issues were pushed lower on the agenda. It redefined who was a U.S. ally and who was an enemy. 9/11 challenged the continued viability of long-standing strategic doctrines of containment and deterrence.

These effects on Bush and his agenda are important. On the other hand, a narrow focus on 9/11 as the sole shaping influence of Bush's subsequent foreign policy neglects the fact that he had important pre-9/11 experiences, issue priorities and policy views. Those factors came together to give Bush a distinct vision of America's interests and role in the world, aptly termed "assertive nationalism."<sup>1</sup> One way to assess the impact of 9/11 on Bush and his foreign policy is to compare Bush, the candidate of 2000, with Bush, the incumbent in 2004. This comparison shows that, although there have been significant shifts in his personal handling of policy and in his priorities, his underlying world vision largely has remained consistent over the course of his presidency.

## The Making of a Foreign Policy President

During the long 2000 presidential campaign, foreign policy got little attention compared to issues such as taxes, education, and character. Traditionally, bold foreign policy debates are rare during campaigns for two key reasons. First, few voters focus great attention on foreign policy except at times of crisis. In 2000, the world seemed relatively safe and calm. Second, candidates want to maintain policy flexibility should they be elected.

Many observers speculated that Bush's lack of foreign policy focus resulted not from a quiet world or campaign strategy, but instead reflected his inexperience and disinterest in the area. Since his previous top political post was Governor of Texas, Bush could not match the foreign policy credentials of his chief rivals: Senator John McCain and Vice President Al Gore. In recent elections, other candidates who previously had served only as governors had faced, and largely overcome, this problem. For Bush, though, the problem was trickier, because, for much of his life, he had adopted what one observer called "a principled provincialism," an active avoidance of foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> Although he went to school during the Vietnam War, Bush was not an activist in favor or against the war. Rather than serving in Vietnam, he joined the Texas Air National Guard. Despite his father's influence and opportunities, Bush had rarely traveled internationally. Furthermore, unlike Clinton and others, Bush showed little interest in academic or think tank sponsored discussions of foreign policy. Most of his political career centered on Texas state politics and a limited number of domestic issues. Supporters tried to downplay the importance of past experience and stress Bush's intellectual curiosity about foreign policy. Still, many critics questioned whether he was qualified to lead the world's only superpower.

These questions were reinforced by Bush's poor showing on specific foreign policy knowledge. Bush's lack of detailed knowledge was highlighted by an incident in November

1999. During a general interview, Boston TV reporter Andy Hiller challenged Bush to name the leaders of four global hotspots: Chechnya, Taiwan, Pakistan, and India. Bush was caught completely off-guard, but, despite his clear irritation, he attempted to answer the questions. Of the four, Bush only correctly identified the surname of Taiwan's leader, Lee Teng-hui. For weeks, press reports of Bush's campaigning referred back to the encounter and reinforced doubts about Bush's competency. Doubts were also raised by his tendency to misspeak and mispronounce words. He referred to Greeks as "Grecians," confused the countries of Slovakia and Slovenia and made bold pronouncements such as, "If the terriers and bariffs are torn down, this economy will grow."<sup>3</sup> Of course, under pressure and constant scrutiny, all speakers make occasional errors, but "Bushspeak" and "Bushisms" became the butt of jokes on late night TV and Internet sites.

To help combat his perceived problems Bush consulted with many foreign policy specialists. He then assembled a group of eight, nicknamed the "Vulcans," to be his tutors on world affairs. The group was co-chaired by Condoleezza Rice, the former provost at Stanford who would go on to serve as national security adviser. Bush described Rice as the person who "can explain to me foreign policy matters in a way I can understand."<sup>4</sup> She became Bush's alter ego on foreign policy to the point that her writings and comments on policy were considered a direct reflection of Bush's views. The other co-chair was Paul Wolfowitz, a well known neoconservative with a strong vision of how to use American power, who later became deputy secretary of defense. The group met repeatedly with Bush, often engaging in three hour long sessions at his Crawford, Texas ranch. They also kept in frequent contact with each other and prepared regular briefings for Bush on recent world events. It was, perhaps, the most intense tutorial in which a candidate has ever engaged. The Vulcans succeeded in two major objectives:

worry about Bush's credentials lessened once he surrounded himself with a team of topflight advisers and Bush showed a marked improvement in his knowledge base and confidence on foreign policy issues as the campaign went on. Still, although members of the group always were careful to stress that Bush was not just a blank slate waiting to be filled with information, the very need for the tutorial fueled questions about Bush's competence and whether he would become a puppet of his advisers.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond these questions related to his interest in and knowledge of foreign policy, there was the question of whether Bush had a clear strategic doctrine to guide post-Cold War policy. Bush criticized the Clinton administration for not developing such a doctrine and argued that the country should not "move from crisis to crisis like a cork in a current."<sup>6</sup> He felt that, without a strong guiding doctrine, both friends and foes would be unsure of U.S. positions, isolationist arguments might creep back into the intellectual vacuum, and policy would reflect short-term pressures from domestic groups and the press. During the 2000 campaign, however, Bush never formally spelled out his own strategic doctrine.

Four years later, Bush's reelection campaign strategy is a near polar opposite to that of 2000. In 2000, he clearly hoped voters would overlook his foreign policy limitations and remember his domestic policy ideas. In 2004, he is running on his foreign policy credentials and now intentionally brings foreign policy into speeches on many domestic issues. His first campaign ads were titled "Lead" and "Tested" and featured images of wreckage from the World Trade Center and firefighters carrying a fallen victim. This change of focus is partly attributable to changes in voter interest and to the realities of incumbency. The quiet, safe world of 2000 has been replaced by one where Americans feel both their personal and national security is at risk and in which they face a global struggle against terrorism. Voters are therefore intensely focused

on foreign policy. In a May 2004 poll, voters chose “the war in Iraq” as the top issue they would like to hear the candidates discuss during the presidential campaign.<sup>7</sup> In the same poll, if one combines Iraq with other related answers such as “terrorism” or “foreign policy,” one-third of voters chose a foreign policy issue. This is a dramatic contrast to polls in 2000, in which only four percent of voters chose a foreign policy topic.<sup>8</sup> Also, 2004 is different for Bush simply because he is no longer running as the challenger, who can afford to spend more time focused on domestic issues and keep policy flexibility by broadly discussing selective international issues. Rather, he is the incumbent, with a four year track record on issues across the diverse spectrum of foreign policy and the man who will ultimately be seen as personally responsible for any successes, or failures, that occurred throughout his term.

More crucially, the 2004 focus on foreign policy also reflects how 9/11 changed Bush and his presidency. Although he still cares about domestic policy, he has described himself as a “war president.”<sup>9</sup> He has devoted countless hours to the war on terrorism, the war on Iraq, and other issues. He has given dozens of major speeches on foreign policy. In a 2002 interview, Rice highlighted the changes by noting “He spends far more time on these issues now” and cited as proof the three national security council meetings a week, the hours of morning terrorism briefings, and the succession of calls Bush makes to foreign leaders.<sup>10</sup> Critics of Bush will likely always regard him as lacking intellectual depth and knowledge, but many foreign and domestic critics have come out of meetings admitting that they have been pleasantly surprised by his leadership and command of detail.

Also, he has gone from someone perceived to have little broad vision on foreign policy to a man perceived to be on a mission to reshape the world. When asked in a November 2003 BBC interview, “what would you say is the most important lesson you’ve learned in the life of the

presidency?” Bush responded, “To have a clear vision of where you want to lead, and lead. I’ve got a clear vision. It’s a world that is more free, and therefore more peaceful.”<sup>11</sup> The Bush Doctrine of defeating all international terrorists and their supporters has been controversial in implementation, but almost universally accepted as a major guidepost for future administrations.

### Changes in Bush’s Foreign Policy Priorities

In 2000, three major speeches highlighted the few foreign policy issues on which Bush put great focus. In a September 1999 speech, Bush stated his defense policy objectives: to renew the bond of trust between the military and the president, develop a national missile defense system and invest in new military technologies. He also felt that both U.S. friends and enemies needed to be sure that America’s president had the will to use force abroad.<sup>12</sup> In a November 1999 speech, he discussed continuing threats to America and world stability. The speech included a passing reference to checking the spread of weapons of mass destruction, but the major focus was on Russia and China as countries that could pose future challenges due to uncertainties in their economic and political transitions.<sup>13</sup> In August 2000, Bush declared that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be the “Century of the Americas.” The United States would seek to enhance relations with its neighbors, rather than treating them as an afterthought. Specifically, Bush suggested the United States would support democracy and human rights in Latin America, address security threats posed by drug trafficking, and enhance economic growth through both specific polices and a sweeping commitment to creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).<sup>14</sup>

In 2004, Bush can only cite his policies on one of the three year 2000 issue areas as both consistent and successful. On military policy, Bush can stress that he has much better relations

with the military than did Clinton. He has gone forward with plans for a missile defense, which after 9/11 and revelations of North Korea's nuclear advancements, he argues is more crucial than ever. He has brought U.S. defense spending to an all-time high. There can also be little doubt about Bush's willingness to use force when he feels U.S. interests are in jeopardy.

In the other two areas, the impact of 9/11 is clearly seen. First, Bush has completely reversed his views on Russia. Russian support in the war on terrorism, along with its willingness to move beyond Cold War era treaties, has helped create a close friendship between Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Generally, Russia is now considered a friend that will grow closer with continued reform not a potential enemy. China has not become as close a friend as Russia, but the sense that the bilateral relationship was headed toward confrontation seems to have passed. Finally, U.S.-Latin American relations have been pushed to the back burner once again due to the post-9/11 need to build alliances of major countries against terrorism and Bush administration focus on Afghanistan and the Middle East. Bush has spent little time in Latin America and the free trade pact remains to be negotiated. As in the past, the only countries that get major U.S. attention or resources are those representing problems, such as Colombia and Cuba.

The foreign policy issues dominating the 2004 campaign are terrorism and Iraq. These issues drew comparatively little attention in 2000. They are both areas in which early successes seemed likely to catapult Bush to a second term, but ongoing violence and sense of threat now put his reelection in jeopardy. They are also issues that highlight both Bush's concept of replacing deterrence with preemption and Bush's tense relations with Europe and other allies. Formerly, both preemption and alliance relations are issues that would have largely interested



only academics, but the fact that they could become a major campaign focus demonstrates the reshaping effects of 9/11.

### Bush's World Vision

Although the specific issues of 2004 are sharply different from 2000, if one goes beyond those issues to look at Bush's underlying world vision, one sees impressive consistency. Making this connection, however, requires a firm understanding of Bush's views in 2000 and of why they constitute a distinct vision of the world.

To better explain Bush's vision, four established, competing world visions will be reviewed. Then, the ways Bush's views overlap or contradict these visions will be discussed. Finally, Bush's world vision of assertive nationalism will be explored in detail (see Table 1). In this process, it is important to remember that these world visions are ideal types and thus particular individuals may not fit perfectly into any one framework.

#### Isolationism

The isolationist tradition can be traced back to the earliest days of the United States. George Washington, in his farewell address, advised that the country should stay separate from European politics and, while encouraging trade ties, avoid permanent military alliances. This vision rested on the ideas that: 1) American democracy was a new and special phenomenon that should avoid the impurities of power politics, 2) the United States could use the oceans as natural buffers, and 3) a realization that the early United States was a weak power that risked being overwhelmed by others.

Modern isolationism has kept the idea that America is special and should avoid impurities, but it has had to adapt to a world in which technology and trade have lessened America's natural buffers and in which the United States is too powerful to simply ignore the rest of the world. Today's isolationists therefore seek to limit the country's global role without a total retreat from world affairs. They often oppose free trade agreements and support protective tariffs for American industry. They favor a strong defense, but one focused on protecting U.S. soil and core interests. They are sharply opposed to multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, which they feel pull the United States into global problem areas and interfere with America's sovereign right to decide its own policies.

In the 2000 presidential campaign, these views were represented by Patrick Buchanan and, coming from the opposite end of the conservative/liberal spectrum, Ralph Nader. Isolationist views also were widespread among Republicans in Congress, particularly those who had come to office in the 1990s. These Republicans often proudly announced their disinterest in foreign affairs and other countries. For example, Dick Armey, a Texas Representative who served as House majority leader, bragged, "I've been to Europe once. I don't have to go again."<sup>15</sup> They often criticized Clinton administration humanitarian interventions and sought to place strict time limits on troop deployments. They helped defeat the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and repeatedly sought to limit U.S. funding to the United Nations and other international institutions.

### Liberal Internationalism

One strand of internationalist thought is often traced back to the ideas of Woodrow Wilson and therefore referred to as "liberal internationalism" or "Wilsonianism." Wilson argued

that, by encouraging cooperation and establishing world norms, international institutions could temper the worst aspects of power politics and create a stable international society parallel to stable domestic societies. Liberal internationalists thus favor trade ties, military agreements, and participation in multilateral initiatives as a way of enmeshing the United States and other world powers in a global community. They are by no means pacifists, as they recognize the need to defend the United States and its allies and the need to enforce international norms. For example, they would often support the use of U.S. force, preferably in conjunction with allies, to end massive human rights abuses or humanitarian crises. Liberal internationalists, however, do feel that the place of force is declining in the modern era, since it cannot respond to global economic downturns, environmental destruction, global poverty, or other emerging global issues.

In the 2000 campaign, liberal internationalist views were represented by Al Gore. Gore strongly defended Clinton era interventions and nation-building efforts in Haiti and the Balkans as necessary to end abuses and bring stability. He supported active U.S. efforts to negotiate peace deals in Northern Ireland and the Middle East. He argued the United States still needed to be wary of past foes like Russia and China, but should increase trade and contact with these countries to encourage democratic and economic reform. He also advanced a policy he termed “forward engagement” to address economic, environmental, and health problems around the world.

### Traditional Internationalism

Within Republican Party history, the post-WWII decision by Congressional leaders such as Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, presidential leaders such as Dwight Eisenhower and much of the Republican voting base to reject isolationism and support internationalist efforts such as the U.N.

and global anticommunism was a key turning point. This decision led to a large degree of Cold War era consensus with the more Wilsonian Democrats; however, even during the Cold War, and particularly at its end, the traditional Republican internationalists tended to diverge from the liberal internationalists on two points. First, they preferred greater focus on security and national defense issues as opposed to the broader economic and environmental goals of the liberals. Second, they were more wary of humanitarian interventions, which they feared could trap the United States in long-term quagmires similar to Vietnam. For example, the traditional internationalists supported U.S. intervention in Somalia to stop a civil war and resulting famine, but they opposed Clinton administration and U.N. efforts to do “nation-building” of Somalia’s political, economic, and legal systems. Still, the traditionalists did not rule out action on all humanitarian or other non-security issues, since they felt that U.S. power gave it some moral obligation to help weaker countries.

During the 2000 campaign, there was no candidate clearly espousing these views. The last great exemplar was therefore George H. W. Bush. While President he argued, “We have a vision of a new partnership of nations . . . based on consultation, cooperation and collective action . . . whose goals are to increase democracy, increase prosperity, increase the peace and reduce arms.”<sup>16</sup>

### Neoconservatism

The neoconservative movement, often shortened down to “neocon,” traces its intellectual history to the late 1960s and 1970s. At the time, a number of young intellectuals began to rally around Democratic Senator Henry M. “Scoop” Jackson, a hawk on Vietnam who favored challenging the Soviets on issues such as religious oppression, and was a strong supporter of

Israel. Many of these intellectuals became disillusioned with the Democratic Party over time and moved to the Republicans as supporters of Ronald Reagan. During the Reagan administration, many neocons held important positions and pushed Reagan's ideas of military strength and promoting American values and democracy. Under the elder Bush and Clinton, they fell from power and leaders of the movement declared it dead. In large part, their decline reflected the fact that the end of the Cold War took away their major idea of strongly confronting the Soviets, and no new threat emerged. In the late-1990s, however, the neocons reemerged with a new generation of supporters in addition to some old players.

The neocons believe that the United States must emphasize national security issues and development of a strong defense because the world remains a dangerous place, with rising powers and terrorists threatening the United States. They feel military power is paramount over economic or other strength. They believe that the United States must work to maintain predominance in the world--not only to defend itself, but because it promotes global trade and democracy, and prevents the rise of abusive authoritarianism. The United States must therefore be ever-vigilant and willing to use force early, if it will prevent future threats from emerging. The neocons also retain a degree of Wilsonianism in believing that spreading democracy and ending human rights abuses justifies military intervention. In fact, many trace the resurgence of neoconservatism to the late-1990s, when neocons supported Clinton administration humanitarian actions and pushed for even more aggressive policies in the Balkans, while many Republican isolationists or traditional internationalists opposed the action as not in U.S. national security interests.

During the primaries, many neocons supported Senator John McCain against Bush and repeatedly wrote opinion pieces arguing that Bush was too much like Gore. Others though, such as Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, became advisers for Bush.

### Breaking Away from the Past

During the campaign, Gore suggested that Bush's lack of foreign policy experience would lead him to be shaped "by the ideologies and inveterate antipathies of his party--the right wing, partisan isolationism of the Republican Congressional leadership."<sup>17</sup> This suggestion never stuck, because Bush directly rejected isolationism in his own speeches. Bush argued that isolationism is a "shortcut to chaos. It is an approach that abandons our allies, and our ideals. . . . American foreign policy cannot be founded on fear. Fear that American workers can't compete. Fear that America will corrupt the world--or be corrupted by it."<sup>18</sup> He did share, though, some of the isolationist's distrust of the U.N. and multilateral agreements and some of their wariness of using force to spread American ideals. He thus agreed with them on issues such as rejecting certain international agreements and limiting purely humanitarian interventions.

With his support of internationalism, Bush overlapped the liberal internationalists on some issues such as promoting trade and building U.S. alliances. However, he criticized Clinton and Gore for cutting defense spending, being too soft on potential challengers like China, and for using U.S. forces for humanitarian efforts. Bush and Rice also strongly argued that Clinton and liberal internationalists felt "that the United States is exercising power legitimately only when it is doing so on behalf of someone or something else." In their view, helping humanity should be "a second-order effect. America's pursuit of the national interest will create conditions that promote freedom, markets, and peace."<sup>19</sup> Thus, they favored less focus on coalition building and

on non-security problems. Rice also criticized Clinton's belief in multilateralism, saying that the administration's "attachment to largely symbolic agreements and its pursuit of, at best, illusory 'norms' of international behavior have become epidemic."<sup>20</sup>

As a loyal and proud son, Bush did not directly attack his father's policies, but he actually held quite different views than traditional internationalists. Bush, Rice, and others stressed that "the world is a different place than it was in 1990 or 1991 or 1992."<sup>21</sup> They thus rejected the cautious, gradual policies of the elder Bush in favor of bold actions. Whereas the elder Bush worked closely with U.S. allies, the younger Bush was more willing to act alone if necessary. Boldness and more willingness to take unilateral action led to Bush's plan to build a national missile defense, despite the objections from Russia and some U.S. allies, and produced tougher talk on the need to remove, not just contain, Saddam Hussein. Bush was also less supportive of humanitarian intervention than his father, who saw it as a moral obligation. During the debates, Bush was careful to blame problems in Somalia on the nation-building of the Clinton administration and not his father's initial intervention; however, on separate occasions, he noted that military action in Somalia, or Africa more generally, was unlikely under his administration.

Finally, Bush's views did have much in common with the neocons. He relied more on advice from that group of Republicans, than from the isolationists or traditional internationalists. He agreed with their calls for a strong military and warnings that the world remained full of threats. He also agreed that American values and democracy were good for the world and should be a focus of foreign policy. He was not prepared, however, to accept the neocon's missionary campaign to actively spread democracy. For example, he broke with some Republicans in supporting Clinton's intervention in Kosovo, but he supported it not as part of a universal mission to challenge authoritarian rule and spread democracy, but because he saw the Balkans as

strategically important. Additionally, he wanted a tougher policy on China, but, while the neocons favored an aggressive campaign for political reform, Bush would not push democracy to the point of jeopardizing U.S. commercial interests.

### Candidate Bush's New Approach: Assertive Nationalism

Although Bush never sought to place his views in an overall intellectual framework, it is possible use his and Rice's comments from the 2000 campaign to outline the world vision he brought to the presidency. Bush's assertive nationalism rested on four core principles about foreign policy and America's role in the world.

#### Guaranteeing the Tools of U.S. Power

Bush felt strongly that the United States should be the world's leader, which entailed ensuring it had the tools, particularly military tools, to defend itself, support its allies, and challenge its enemies. For Bush rebuilding the military, showing the will to use U.S. force, and reinforcing ties with allies therefore became priorities. He pointed out that U.S. military spending as a percentage of GNP was at its lowest since before World War II; yet, during the last few years under Clinton, there had been an average of one deployment every nine weeks. He felt this mismatch of funds and commitments had left the military with poorly paid soldiers, a lack of spare parts, and not enough commitment to weapons research. Of course, some of the military decrease under Clinton resulted from a widespread desire to get a "peace dividend" of reduced spending after the Cold War, but Bush felt Clinton had gone too far and left the U.S. dangerously weak.



He also felt that Clinton had left the U.S. without world respect because he had not shown enough will to use force to defend U.S. interests. Bush argued, “There are limits to the smiles and scowls of diplomacy. 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.”<sup>22</sup> Bush did not give specifics on where he would employ force, but he sought to put the world on notice.

Finally, Bush sought to enhance ties with U.S. allies, so that they could be counted on when the United States needed them. For example, he repeatedly criticized Clinton for having visited China for a week, but not stopped off in Japan, South Korea, or the Philippines to reinforce U.S. support. He argued that traditional U.S. allies in Latin America should no longer be ignored. He voiced strong support for Israel and for commitments to NATO allies. To some degree, his focus on strengthening alliances may seem to contradict Bush’s support for unilateral actions, but this discrepancy can be reconciled by understanding two points. First, Bush and his advisers assumed that allied countries, namely democracies and those favoring free markets, generally would have common goals and enemies. Therefore, alliances would not entail compromise among competing positions, but rather would represent coalitions of like-minded countries. Second, Bush assumed that other countries would acknowledge that U.S. power gave it a special role in the world and a leadership position in any alliance. Bush’s views on allies were much like his views on advisers. Both should be guided by a broad vision laid out by their leader. They are then encouraged to voice their opinions, which often agree in any case. The ultimate decision is made by the leader and others are expected to bury any disagreements and present a united front.

### Harboring Resources

Bush felt it was crucial to build up U.S. power, but he also felt it was important not to squander that power on unnecessary missions. During the whole campaign, Bush, in sharp contrast to Gore, made only passing references to problems of global poverty, spread of diseases like AIDS, and environmental issues. His main stance on the environment was to strongly oppose the 1997 Kyoto Accord on greenhouse gasses as too costly for U.S. businesses and unfair because it did not impose limits on developing countries. Similarly, Bush sought to limit U.S. military missions in strategically less important areas. For example, Bush repeatedly excluded the entire continent of Africa from lists of U.S. priorities.

Most dramatically, in sharp contrast to both liberal internationalist and neocon views, Bush argued that the United States should not use its military for purely humanitarian missions and nation-building. He repeatedly argued that the purpose of the military was to win wars. Therefore, the United States “should not send our troops to stop ethnic cleansing and genocide in nations outside our strategic interest.”<sup>23</sup> Rice often spoke disparagingly of the idea that the United States should be the world’s policeman. Furthermore, when Bush discussed nation-building during the debates, he made it sound close to a dirty word. Interestingly, when pressed for specifics, Bush supported almost every U.S. intervention of the last several decades. He singled out actions to restore democracy in Haiti as the only clear misuse of force, but in each of the other cases, he argued that the action was justified for security, not moral, reasons.

### Challenging Enemies

Bush argued that U.S. power was good for the country, but also good for the world. It did, though, make the United States the target of any rising power. Therefore, the United States

had to remain ever vigilant and ready to defend its leadership position. Bush singled out three threats that needed particular attention: Russia, China, and rogue countries like Iraq and North Korea. At times, terrorists were included in the category of rogues because of the fear of state-sponsored terrorism, but before 9/11, Bush spoke little on terrorist threats.

In 2000, Russia and China were the two most powerful countries that were not part of the U.S. alliance structure. Both countries were still in transition to capitalism and democracy. Both had unsettled regional issues, particularly Chechnya for Russia and Taiwan for China. Each maintained strong military forces that could complicate American goals and directly threaten the U.S. homeland. With regard to Russia, Bush and his advisers were wary of Putin's commitment to reform and criticized the Clinton administration for being too closely tied to particular leaders. Bush spoke sharply against future international aid for Russia and hoped to focus the relationship on security issues such as nuclear arms reductions, controlling nuclear material to lessen the threat of proliferation, and convincing Russia to accept a U.S. missile defense system. On China, Bush disagreed with some in his own party by favoring continued expansion of commercial ties, but he argued Clinton had gone too far in trying to cultivate ties. Bush repeatedly described China as a competitor, not a "strategic partner" as Clinton suggested. Bush focused attention on China's recent military build-up. He hinted that he would do more to protect Taiwan and stated he would go forward with missile defense despite Chinese objections.

Finally, although it was not a major campaign focus, Bush warned of the growing danger posed by rogue states that sought weapons of mass destruction. During the primaries, Bush was asked what he would do if Iraq's Saddam Hussein was found to be developing weapons of mass destruction. Bush answered, "I'd take 'em out."<sup>24</sup> He later scaled his rhetoric back, saying that

there would be “consequences” for Iraq,<sup>25</sup> but these comments showed Bush was thinking of these threats well before 9/11.

### Unilateralism

The final major piece of Bush’s world vision was his willingness to act unilaterally. This willingness reflected Bush’s view that the United States had risen to such power that it no longer needed to compromise its goals in pursuit of allied support. Second, Bush had supreme faith that the United States as a democratic, free market, peace-loving country would always be following the proper course. If others objected to U.S. policies, either they were U.S. enemies, or they were allies that simply had not yet seen the wisdom of the U.S. actions, but would come around over time. There was no logic in delaying action to build a multilateral coalition, since that coalition would be best built through positive action.

Bush’s willingness to act unilaterally also reflects his distrust of the U.N. and other multilateral institutions. Although Bush was not as hostile to these institutions as others in his party, he did feel that the U.N.’s role should be circumscribed until it was reformed. Bush saw the U.N. as inefficient--it spent an increasingly large budget, but could not point to clear successes. Additionally, it frequently debated issues without taking firm actions. These realities went against Bush’s strong personal belief in demanding accountability of programs, and against his beliefs in efficient discussion followed by bold action. Bush would act multilaterally if institutions and coalitions supported his positions, but was prepared to act unilaterally if they did not.

### Incumbent Bush: Assertive Nationalism in Action

Although great alternations in the world's circumstances over the past four years have led to shifts in his priorities, Bush has remained quite consistent in his world vision.

#### Guaranteeing the Tools of U.S. Power

In 2000, Bush argued that it was necessary to build up the U.S. military and work with allies to assure U.S. power in the future. While President, he has pursued both of these points and formalized them in the National Security Strategy issued in September 2002. The NSS declared:

The United States must and will maintain the capability to defeat any attempt by an enemy -- whether a state or nonstate actor -- to impose its will on the United States, our allies, or our friends. We will maintain the forces sufficient to support our obligations, and to defend freedom. Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Under Bush the Pentagon's budget has seen significant increases and now stands at an all time high in dollar figures. Bush has also committed extensive funding to the new Department of Homeland Security, which has some functions that spill into foreign policy. Finally, the president has recently spoken of the need to increase funding for new technologies, such as new sensors and intelligence gathering tools that can be used in the war on terrorism.

Following his ideas on the importance of alliances, Bush played a key role in three decisions on NATO's future. First, Bush led efforts to create a NATO-Russia Council to give Russia a role in decision-making. The council consists of all NATO members and Russia. If no consensus can be reached on a given issue, the issue is decided by just the NATO members, so that Russia does not have a veto over actions. Second, Bush signaled early in his administration that he favored extending NATO membership to countries in Eastern Europe. Despite some

worry from European officials that rapid expansion would offend Russia and bring in countries without fully established democracies, Bush achieved his objective at NATO's 2002 Prague Summit as seven new countries were added to the alliance. This expansion, coupled with the Russia council, brought most of the European continent into a single security alliance for the first time in history, but one that still would see significant U.S. leadership. Third, Bush strongly argued that threats to European security now came less from within Europe than from terrorists and rogue states. At Prague, he also won support for expanding NATO's "out of area" operations and for creating a new rapid reaction force to address the new threats.

Certainly Bush has had strained relations with certain U.S. allies at times, but the war on terror has enabled the administration to enhance U.S. relations with several countries such as Pakistan, the Philippines, Yemen, and Libya and to work with existing allies in new initiatives. One area in which the administration has worked multilaterally is in the limitation of terrorists' financial capabilities. On September 24, Bush signed Executive Order 13224, which blocked the funds of terrorists and anyone associated with them. The United States then led U.N. efforts to pass resolutions that froze assets on a global basis. 161 countries and jurisdictions have taken financial actions. In total, well over \$100 million has been frozen worldwide. The importance Bush placed on these efforts was illustrated by his insistence that he, not Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill, announce the measures.

In dealing with alliances, though, Bush stuck to the idea that they should be tools of U.S. power, not constraints on U.S. action. A key idea was that the goal of building coalitions would not be allowed to shape the mission. If countries, individually or collectively, objected to U.S. actions, they would not be given veto power over those actions. In a key September 15 meeting, Bush told his top advisers, "At some point, we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me.

We are America.”<sup>27</sup> Bush also maintained his view that the best way to build a coalition was through active leadership that would convince doubters. Bush’s response to a European leader, who had suggested the need for increased consultation and discussions, was revealing: “My belief is 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.”<sup>28</sup> These views are very much in line with Bush’s statements of 2000.

### Harboring Resources

During the 2000 campaign, Bush was very forceful in saying that the U.S. military would not engage in nation-building. At first glance, U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq seem to show a change on this issue, but a closer look reveals underlying consistency. Bush never ruled out all interventions, only those for purely humanitarian goals. For example, he supported action in Kosovo because it advanced U.S. security interests. The actions taken in Afghanistan and Iraq were similarly justified on national security grounds. There was some mention of overthrowing dictatorial regimes with poor human rights records, but this seems largely to have been an effort to rally popular support for the wars. When weapons of mass destruction were not found in Iraq, more focus was put on the goal of building democracy in the region, but again such talk seems largely to have been aimed at calming public criticism and disputes over pre-war intelligence.

Since entering Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. military has not engaged in significant nation-building. The administration prefers to leave those tasks to the multilateral institutions, or to local leadership. In Afghanistan, the NATO and the UN have been active, and Karzai quickly emerged as a viable local leader. In Iraq, the UN pulled out for security reasons and no unifying

local leadership has emerged. The United States has thus had to carry more of the burden in Iraq out of necessity, not presidential choice. The administration's insistence on turning over authority to Iraqi leadership by the summer of 2004 further shows Bush's distaste for long-term military engagements and political control.

### Challenging Enemies

Bush continues to see the world as a dangerous place, with ongoing threats to U.S. interests and preeminence. During the campaign of 2000, Bush focused on security threats such as China and Russia and said less about terrorism and rogue states. 9/11 showed that the greater threat--at least in the short term--came from terrorism, so Bush simply reshuffled the order.

It is noteworthy, though, that Bush quickly rejected the idea of handling 9/11 as a crime to be investigated and brought to court and instead declared it a war. Also important is how Bush outlined the rationale for the war. He closely paralleled the ideas of Truman and others on fighting communism. Truman argued that communism posed a growing challenge not only to specific countries, but to peace and freedom worldwide. Second, he contended countries faced a black and white choice between two alternative ways of life and two different sets of allies. Finally, Truman stated that the postwar United States was in a unique position, and therefore, would support all free peoples resisting subjugation. In Bush's September 20, 2001 speech to Congress, he argued that the September 11 attacks demonstrated that international terrorists and their supporters had emerged as the new, global "enemies of freedom."<sup>29</sup> That night and later, Bush compared the terrorists directly to the previous era's totalitarians, arguing that they seek to control every aspect of life and impose their views through violence. Like Truman, Bush argued that no country could be neutral in this conflict: all must choose between radicalism and



freedom, between support for terrorism and support for civilization, between evil and good. Most crucially, Bush echoed Truman in arguing that the United States has a unique global responsibility to defend freedom through direct action or support of others. Bush announced a global war on terrorism “until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.”<sup>30</sup>

On rogue states, the administration has also acted from the premise that countries have hostile intentions toward the United States and should be treated accordingly. Because WMD have not been found in Iraq, much of the post-war debate has centered on faulty intelligence estimates of their existence. This debate, however, somewhat overshadows the important question of whether an Iraq with nuclear capability would indeed have been a threat. The administration’s assumption was that Saddam was pursuing weapons with a plan to use them, or possibly to give them to terrorists, not that he might be pursuing weapons as a deterrent or simply as a symbol of great power status. It also was assumed that no degree of lessening sanctions, increasing trade, or other forms of engagement could ever lead Saddam to be anything but an enemy of the United States. With Bush’s assumptions that an imminent threat existed if Saddam had weapons and that no other policy could work, it did not take much intelligence information to convince him that war was justified. Similar assumptions of implacable hostile intentions and the need for military responses, either preemptive invasions or the missile defense shield, have driven Bush administration policies toward Iran and North Korea.

### Unilateralism

The clearest example of the Bush administration’s unilateralism was the war in Iraq, which clearly did not have the support of the broader world community. Bush saw it as

important for U.S. national security and knew that the U.S. had the military capability to act alone. Therefore, he adopted the attitude that UN or allied support would be appreciated, but certainly was not necessary. Administration officials challenged the UN to act or become irrelevant. When the UN did not act, some observers saw it as the possible death knell of the UN movement. Additionally, the decision to limit rebuilding contracts in Iraq to countries that participated in the war reinforced the idea that not only will the United States act unilaterally, but it will expect the bulk of the spoils.

The administration has also disagreed with allies and gone its own way on numerous other issues, including the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, the ABM treaty limiting missile defenses, and the International Criminal Court. In each case, the administration has argued that U.S. interests must be preserved. Again this is directly in line with Bush's views of 2000.

### What is New in Bush's Thinking

The biggest change in Bush's world vision since 2000 was his decision to support large increases in U.S. foreign aid funding and specifically AIDS funding. In March 2002, Bush proposed to increase foreign aid 50 percent over three years through the new Millennium Challenge Account. This aid would not go to all countries, but would be conditioned on progress in economic and political reform. In his State of the Union address in January 2003, Bush called for \$15 billion over five years to fight the AIDS crisis. These announcements are notable since there was no hint during 2000 that Bush would seek large funding increases. In fact, during the campaign, Bush repeatedly left Africa out of lists of areas with key U.S. interests.

Bush's change of heart in this area is a result of three factors: interest of key advisers, a desire to make the United States appear a compassionate world leader, and the rise of religious

conservatives as a new force in Republican foreign policy circles. The aid increases have been pushed by Powell and Rice, as well as by Senator Bill Frist, the Senate's majority leader and a doctor with extensive experience in Africa. Second, the largest AIDS initiative was announced in a speech that primarily focused on building a case for the Iraq war. It also seemed at times that Bush was in a contest with French President Chirac, his frequent rival on security issues, to see who could be more generous to the developing world. Many believe that some anti-Americanism stems from a perception of the United States as a stingy, security-focused world power. The foreign aid and AIDS plans can be read as attempts to negate that stigma. Religious conservatives have also helped convince Bush to expand his idea of "compassionate conservatism" globally. For example, Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son, who Bush highly respects, convened an international Christian conference to address the AIDS issue in February 2002. At the conference, Graham argued that it was a moral and religious duty to address the pandemic. Religious groups also have argued that helping the world's poorest follows biblical ideas. When Bush announced his AIDS plan, he showed his own religious convictions by arguing, "We have a chance to achieve a more compassionate world for every citizen. America believes deeply that everybody has worth, everybody matters, everybody was created by the Almighty, and we're going to act on that belief and we'll act on that passion."<sup>31</sup>

### What is Not New

Some observers have argued that, during his time in office, Bush has been converted to the neoconservative viewpoint. The extreme of this view was expressed by Michael Lind who argued that neocons took advantage of Rumsfeld-- "an elderly figurehead who holds the position of defense secretary only because Wolfowitz is too controversial"-- and "Bush's ignorance and

inexperience” to “capture the Bush administration.”<sup>32</sup> Although there are variations on the argument, the main proof supplied by these observers is that there are many neocons in high-ranking administration positions, and that Bush policies have been in line with long-standing neocon desires. Four policies are particularly mentioned: 1) the war in Iraq, 2) tough stances on other rogues such as Syria, Iran, and North Korea, 3) U.S. support of Israeli actions against Palestinians, and 4) a mission of spreading democracy to the Middle East.

There is no disputing that there are many neocons within the administration and the true extent of certain advisers’ influence may not become clear until more records are available. Still, there are also advisers within Bush’s inner circle from other intellectual factions. Furthermore, it is hard to believe that influential advisers with extensive foreign policy experience, such as Cheney, would be converted easily to new viewpoints and therefore tip Bush toward the neocon view.<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, Bush’s policies on the four key areas can best be explained as those of an assertive nationalist. Bush did lead an invasion of Iraq, for which neocons have been calling for years; however, he rejected efforts by Wolfowitz and others to begin the war in the weeks following 9/11. In addition, Iraq was a country Bush had focused on for personal and family reasons well before he heard from the neocons. Second, while Bush has taken rhetorically tough stances against Syria, Iran, and North Korea, his actions have shown more compromise. The administration worked to enhance cooperation with Syrian intelligence services, moderated U.S. views on Iran in line with the position favored by European allies, and negotiated with North Korea. Unwavering tough action against Iraq appears to be the exception, not the rule. Third, Bush has supported Israeli efforts, but this reflects his personal frustration with Arafat, who he blames for the continued violence, and is consistent with a global war against terrorism. Finally,

Bush has supported the idea of spreading democracy to the Middle East, but this goal largely emerged after the war, when the failure to find weapons of mass destruction put other administration claims in doubt. Also, his insistence on quick transitions to other leadership in Afghanistan and Iraq shows that he still does not believe the United States should engage in extensive nation-building.

#### From 2000 to 2004: Surface Change, Core Consistency

In future years, Bush will be remembered as a major foreign policy president; a prospect that few would seriously have suggested four years ago. In 2004, he is running on, not away from, foreign policy credentials. Also, the specific issues he is raising have been significantly altered. These facts might lead one to believe that the post-9/11 Bush is an entirely changed man. In fact, 9/11 did not change Bush's core views. It reinforced his sense that the world is a dangerous place requiring strong American responses. 9/11 also change international and domestic politics, so it enabled, and his view required, Bush to aggressively pursue his world vision in ways that will have long-lasting impacts on world events.

Table 1

### Comparison of Foreign Policy Visions

	U.S. should engage in free trade and military alliances	U.S. should act unilaterally despite allied objections	U.S. should promote "nation-building" to establish democracies	U.S. should focus on non-security issues
Isolationism	No	Yes	No	No
Liberal Internationalism	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Traditional Internationalism	Yes	No	No	Sometimes
Neoconservatism	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Assertive Nationalism Candidate Bush	Yes	Yes	No	No
Assertive Nationalism Incumbent Bush	Yes	Yes	No	Sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2003), 15.

<sup>2</sup> James Traub, "The Bush Years: W's World," *New York Times*, January 14, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> These and many other quotations are available at  
<http://politicalhumor.about.com/library/blbushisms.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Elaine Sciolino "Bush's Foreign Policy Tutor: An Academic in the Public Eye," *New York Times*, June 16, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Bruni and Eric Schmitt, "Bush Rehearsing for a World Stage," *New York Times*, November 19, 1999; and Eric Schmitt "A Cadre of Familiar Foreign Policy Experts Is Putting Its Imprint on Bush," *New York Times*, December 23, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> George W. Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism," Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California, November 19, 1999, <http://www.foreignpolicy2000.org/library/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/24/opinion/polls/main619122.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Ornstein, "The Legacy of Campaign 2000," *Washington Quarterly* 24 (Spring 2001).

<sup>9</sup> "Interview with President Bush/ The Transcript of NBC's Meet the Press," *Times Mirror Company*, February 9, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in, David E. Sanger, "Leaving for Europe, Bush Draws on Hard Lessons of Diplomacy," *New York Times*, May 22, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> "Interview of the President by Sir David Frost of BBC TV,"  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/print/20031117-1.html>.

<sup>12</sup> George W. Bush, "A Period of Consequences," The Citadel, South Carolina, September 23, 1999, <http://www.foreignpolicy2000.org/library/index.html>.

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<sup>13</sup> Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

<sup>14</sup> George W. Bush, “Century of the Americas,” Florida International University, Miami, Florida, August 25, 2000, <http://www.foreignpolicy2000.org/library/index.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Alison Mitchell, “Bush and the G.O.P. Congress,” *New York Times*, May 19, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Traub.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Katharine Q. Seelye, “Gore Faults Bush on Foreign Policy,” *New York Times*, April 30, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

<sup>19</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Promoting the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs* 79 (Jan/Feb 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Steven Mufson, “A World View of His Own; On Foreign Policy, Bush Parts Ways With Father,” *Washington Post*, August 11, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Bush, “A Distinctly American Internationalism.”

<sup>23</sup> “Interview with George W. Bush,” *ABC’s This Week*, January 23, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in John Lancaster, “In Saddam’s Future, A Harder U.S. Line; Bush, Gore Depart from Clinton Policy,” *Washington Post*, June 3, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in “2<sup>nd</sup> Presidential Debate Between Gov. Bush and Vice President Gore,” *New York Times*, October 12, 2000.

<sup>26</sup> “From the Document: A Stress on Disrupting Terrorism,” *New York Times*, September 20, 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2002), 81

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 281.



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<sup>29</sup> George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” September 20, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “The World: A Calling to Heal; Getting Religion on AIDS,” *New York Times*, February 2, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Lind, “The Weird Men behind George Bush’s War,” *New Statesmen*, April 7, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Hosenball et al, “Cheney’s Long Path to War,” *Newsweek* 142 (November 17, 2003).