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Bush's legacy and America's next foreign policy

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Contents

n° 110 August 2008

Preface

Álvaro de Vasconcelos

Marcin Zaborowski's thorough and comprehensive study of George W. Bush's foreign policy legacy comes out just before the US presidential election. Whatever the outcome of the election, the next incumbent of the White House will have to contend with that legacy, and its burden will be felt whether they choose to stay the present course or reverse it.

The author sets out to address a fundamental question: whether George W. Bush's staunch unilateralism signals a profound structural change in American politics, or whether it amounts to no more than an unfortunate interlude. If the former scenario is true, then its impact is unlikely to disappear overnight; if the latter scenario is the case, then it can be seen as a temporary rupture with the mainstream tradition, when a handful of conservative ideologues came to dominate the foreign policy debate in the wake of the horrific events of 9/11. This is indeed a crucial question not merely for a correct understanding of US foreign and security policy and its likely future orientation, but to understand the way the international system is destined to evolve in the coming decades. Put simply – will this policy be continued?

In order to determine the answer, which cannot be reduced to a simple yes or no, the author sets out to critically examine what Bush's foreign policy legacy essentially amounts to, so as to investigate how deep its influence will be on US politics and, consequently, world politics as well.

The author characterises Bush's foreign policy posture as being marked from day one by a self-defeating mixture of arrogance, manifest in the contempt for diplomatic action that the wave of pro-American solidarity in the wake of the al-Qaeda 9/11 attacks was powerless to counter, and overweening unilateralism. The latter eventually led to the US withdrawing from major international agreements, which were seen by the Bush Administration not as a tool for global governance but, conversely, as a potential hindrance to the sovereign power of the United States. This was accompanied by absolute faith that US military superiority gave it full advantage in 'anticipatory self-defence' – otherwise known as 'pre-emptive' war.

How much of this unfortunate combination is likely to endure? The basis of Marcin Zaborowski's insightful argument is that the 'Bush doctrine'

is not the natural continuation of a seemingly triumphant neo-conservative ideology, but that it is rooted in the tradition of 'American nationalism' which can be traced back to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge's successful opposition to Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. Bush's unilateral nationalism thus echoes the immediate aftermath of the Second World War in that, after the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States saw themselves as the lone, unrivalled 'hyperpower' in a world that had suddenly reverted to 'unipolarity'. During the brief unipolar moment that lasted through the better part of the Clinton years, America pursued a foreign policy of benign hegemony, to borrow Helio Jaguaribe's expression, largely through shaping the action of international institutions. This was in line with George H. W. Bush's post-1989 vision when it came to managing the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact or leading the massive military intervention to push Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991.

A narrow nationalist trend, more bent on unilateralism, and based on the belief that America's interests are best defended by single-handed and single-minded US action with little regard for the common good, is indeed likely to survive in influential conservative Republican circles. Nonetheless, the 'unipolar' decade expired at the turn of the century and is no longer with us. The next US president and those that come after him will no longer have the luxury of exercising power in a world where America rules supreme. And if, to general dismay, they choose to ignore or bypass universal rules and multilateral organisations, they will still have to contend with the conflicting interests of other world players, spurred by mounting demographics and legitimately aspiring to 'first world' status. Established and aspiring world powers and even regional powers currently driving world growth increasingly seek to be reckoned with on the world stage.

This stark reality has not entirely escaped the notice of the Bush Administration. Buoyed up by the grand coalition it needed in support of the 'war on terror', the Administration's hostile rhetoric towards China and Russia at the beginning of Bush's first term in office was soon replaced by overtures of close cooperation, at least in the fight against terrorism, current difficulties in Russia's 'near abroad' notwithstanding. Similarly, there was a marked improvement in relations with Brazil, entrusted with the unenviable task of 'containing' the President of Venezuela. Clinton's policy of put-

ting an end to the awkward estrangement between the US and India, the largest democracy in the world, was also pursued.

Above all, at home and abroad, the Bush Administration will be remembered for launching the war in Iraq. Not so much perhaps because this was a unilateral and unnecessary war, nor because it later became clear that 'secrets and lies' were inextricably woven to justify it before Congress and the American people as a vital military intervention dictated by the imperatives of national security. But rather because it ended not in liberation but in occupation, a monumental tragedy that no end to violence (still hardly in sight) can possibly erase, no more than the human rights abuses epitomised by the graphic horrors of Abu Ghraib can easily be forgotten. The violation of fundamental freedoms and basic human rights, symbolised by Guantanamo, that underpinned the largely ineffectual 'war on terror' has severely damaged the enormous amount of soft power that the United States unquestionably possessed as the world's beacon of democracy. This is the darkest part of Bush's legacy and the most difficult to shed. Much needs to be done by the incoming president to restore America's credibility, and to rebuild the immense soft power of a nation that was the inspirer and initiator of post-war international institutions. European post-war reconstruction owes much to the United States, and so does European integration.

The Bush Administration's relationship with the European Union was deeply scarred by the profound transatlantic divisions over the Iraq war. The decision to go to war confirmed the Europeans' worst fears about the unilateral U-turn that US policy had taken, openly pitching 'New Europe' against the 'Old Europe', in direct contradiction with its confirmed tradition of pushing for a united Europe.

As elsewhere in the world, however, the vast majority of Europeans make a clear distinction between the rulers and the ruled: the unpopularity of the Bush Administration, amply demonstrated by opinion polls, does not reflect on America and the Americans, still widely envied and often admired.

Should the next US president embark on a multilateral path, should he restore the rule-of-law tradition and pursue a different path from his predecessor, expectations – which are already growing at the mere prospect of change in the White House – will be high indeed. Marcin Zabrowski is right

to caution both Europe and the United States against letting expectations of a new era of absolute entente *run too high, for they may well be unwarranted and lead to misgivings and frustration.*

Europeans would be well advised to come to some common understanding of what they expect from the next Administration. In other words, what they think it will take to satisfactorily resolve the urgent issues which have not been effectively addressed – some of which indeed have actually became more acute – during the Bush years, starting with those which top their own list of priorities such as Palestine, Iran, and Afghanistan, as well as the relationship with Russia and China.

Should the next US president embrace a combination of confrontational nationalism and neo-conservative supremacy, and try to cling to an illusory 'unipolar' hegemony now that the world has indeed become multipolar, this would inevitably set the United States on a collision course with Russia and China, provoking a new kind of de facto *bipolarity. Worse, it would set the world clock back to the days of Cold War rivalry and impede the kind of governance through partnership that, as President Clinton understood, was facilitated by economic interdependence. This is a bleak scenario. However, nothing in Marcin Zaborowski's analysis suggests that this outcome is a probability, not least because it is a scenario that Russia would dislike as much as China, given the strong emphasis that both countries, like all aspiring world powers, put on economic development.*

The best hope for the 'better world' sought by the European Union is that the next US president will learn from his predecessor's errors and revert to the original multilateral tradition of the United States. World governance cannot be achieved without universally agreed rules and norms that equally require universal compliance. Competing interests of aspiring and existing world powers cannot be accommodated without a robust framework of enforceable norms and standards that are equal to global challenges. This is the only viable alternative to a dangerous world ruled by strategic competition and rivalry, a configuration bound to lead to a tragic outcome – examples of which, sadly, abound in history.

Paris, September 2008

Executive Summary

America's grand strategy changed during the eight years of George W. Bush's presidency. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 profoundly altered America's view of the world in a way comparable to the effect of Pearl Harbour. Under Bush's Administration American views on who are its foes and how to fight them have changed. The Security Strategy adopted following al-Qaeda's attacks on the American homeland introduced the doctrine of pre-emption, the idea of democracy promotion and that of 'coalitions of the willing', as core elements of America's response to new challenges.

The United States was attacked on its own soil and it was the duty of the President to respond and protect Americans. But the manner of Bush's response is the subject of controversy and his major foreign policy decisions, especially the invasion of Iraq, are now considered to have been mistaken by the majority of Americans. However, regardless of whether Bush will be ultimately judged a failure or not, it is likely that some of the main policies associated with his name will be pursued by his successors, regardless of who will assume the President's office in 2009. This is for two reasons. First, some of Bush's approaches – such as unlilateralism – are in fact deeply entrenched in American political culture and date back a long way before the outgoing president arrived on the scene. The next president will, perhaps, work more willingly with America's allies but just like Bush he will be unlikely to accept agreements, such as Kyoto, which are seen as unfair and damaging to American interests.

Second, 9/11 changed America's strategic environment to an extent that is not always appreciated by its allies. This means that the President sometimes has to take measures that in other states would be seen as deeply controversial or simply unacceptable. For example, whether a future president is a Democrat or a Republican, he is likely to strike terrorist targets in Pakistan without seeking Karachi's permission. Equally, he would not hesitate to approve the elimination of a terrorist leader or wiretap American

citizens for the sake of national security. None of this would be as likely had the US not gone through the experience of 9/11.

The European Union is the closest ally of the United States. The Europeans and the Americans are linked to each other by historical, economic and political ties like no other powers in the world. America's foreign policy reflects on the Europeans too, in the sense that Europeans are often associated with America's foreign policy in the eyes of the wider world – indeed, the outside world often makes no distinction between the US and the EU, simply branding the two as 'the West'. The vast majority of Europeans disapproved of Bush's foreign policy, especially his decision to invade Iraq, and transatlantic relations consequently suffered during his presidency.

The end of the Bush era creates an opportunity for a new departure and a renewed dialogue between the EU and the US. This will not happen if the incoming American Administration chooses not to accept that it must talk to and sometimes be prepared to be persuaded by the Europeans. Of course, Europe must also be open to embrace the incoming administration, as indeed seems likely to happen. The Europeans are generally optimistic about the change in Washington. But European expectations of the change that the new president will bring about are often unrealistic.

This *Chaillot Paper* argues that, regardless of who wins the elections, there will be a considerable element of continuity in America's foreign policy under the new administration. Obama and McCain differ, of course, in their foreign policy style and in their perception of the outside world. Obama, with his Kenyan roots and personal experience of Indonesia, has, arguably, a greater empathy with the third world and a generally more optimistic outlook. McCain, on the other hand, tends to apply a Cold War perspective and concentrates on the threats to US security in his approach to international relations.

Still, the bottom line is that, ultimately, both candidates will always put the security of the United States and the preservation of its primacy first. Gripped by Obamamania, Europe tends to see the Democratic candidate as a left-wing liberal who would reverse Bush's foreign policy. In fact, by European standards Barack Obama would be considered centre-right and his foreign policy posture would be seen as excessively assertive. At the same time, while it is true that John McCain has greater experience of Europe and certainly more empathy with it than George W. Bush, his foreign policy may actually prove to be more hawkish than that of the current president.

The purpose of this *Chaillot Paper* is to give an account of Bush's legacy and provide an indication of where American foreign policy may be heading next. To this end, it examines the ideology and policies that have characterised Bush's Administration and provides some indications of the likely future orientation of America's foreign policy. The *Chaillot Paper* concentrates on American policies in Iraq, Iran and China. It also briefly discusses US relations with Russia and Europe. Transatlantic relations have not been treated as extensively as for example US relations with China, this in part is because they were simply not as important for the Bush Administration. Crucially, however, transatlantic relations are bound to evolve under the next Administration, and this will be the object of a separate analysis.

The chapters

Chapter 1: Bush's revolution and its legacy

This chapter provides an assessment of Bush's foreign policy ideology. It argues that Bush's foreign policy approach, whilst revolutionary in a post-war context, is consistent with the ideology of American nationalism and hegemonism. While Bush's two predecessors, Bill Clinton and Bush's own father, dealt mostly with Cold War-related issues, George W. Bush faced a completely new set of challenges during his presidency. Bush was also the first president who felt comfortable with American hegemony and who lacked an instinctive attachment to alliances and multilateral organisations. This rupture with the post-1945 tradition of American foreign policy constitutes the essence of Bush's revolution.

The approach pursued by Bush was not just based on his ideology. It has been very much an outcome of America's unchallenged military and economic superiority, coupled with ideological changes that occurred in America in the late 1990s. In the last eight years America's superiority has been challenged by rising powers and especially China and India, as well as by a resurgent Russia. The balance of power in the international system has somehow shifted during Bush's presidency, and will continue to evolve in similar directions. Thus the three key aspects of Bush's revolution – self-sufficiency, unilateralism and pre-emption – may continue to be pursued in the future by the President's successor.

Chapter 2: Iraq

Bush will be remembered first and foremost for the war in Iraq. Based on a false rationale, the war proved to be a major strategic blunder for the US. It cost over 4,000 American and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives. Four million Iraqis were forced to leave their homes and the country was split along sectarian divides. In 2006 the cost of the war for the American taxpayers was estimated at nearly 2 trillion dollars. However, following the success of the 'surge' policy that Bush adopted in mid-2007, Iraq is no longer beyond hope. The security situation has improved markedly. The economy is benefiting from high oil prices and the reconciliation process, whilst fragile, is beginning to take root. Still, the progress made in Iraq since is by no means irreversible.

Before the economy became the core theme of the 2008 presidential race, the elections were set to be a referendum on Iraq. Indeed both John McCain and Barack Obama clinched their nominations largely because of their positions on Iraq. As a long-term advocate of the 'surge', McCain clearly benefited from the policy's success. At the same time Obama was the only heavyweight Democrat in the field who opposed this war from the start. During the campaign McCain argued in favour of staying in Iraq as long as necessary, even, as he put it, if it was to take one hundred years. On the other hand, Obama promised that if elected he would pull out all combat troops within sixteen months. While both Obama and McCain now argue from radically different standpoints, it is unlikely that either of them could fully implement their ideas, not least because the Iraqis themselves are demanding that the US withdraw its combat, or perhaps even all, troops no later than 2011.

Chapter 3: Iran

Bush's Iran policy was marked by three essential factors: continuity, neglect and the changes in Iran's strategic environment.

As far as direct relations with Iran are concerned, Bush will actually leave behind little that is substantively new. When he came to power, after years of Clinton's unsuccessful overtures that failed to produce meaningful change, he inherited worsening relations with Tehran. Unlike Clinton, Bush did not even try to reach out to Tehran but neither was he initially un-pragmatic or overtly ideological. In some respects he was also more successful than Clinton. After all, it was under Bush, not Clinton, that the US and

Iran had bilateral face-to-face negotiations on Afghanistan and Iraq in the framework of the Geneva group. However, this cooperation was short-lived and Bush reacted to the discovery of Iran's nuclear programme by seeking its isolation and effectively ending the emerging bilateral cooperation.

Bush's inclusion of Iran in his infamous 'axis of evil' speech and his hinting at the possibility of taking on Iran militarily after Iraq was perhaps an indication that the President was indeed planning a major policy shift and was adopting a clearly aggressive posture *vis-à-vis* Tehran. But the failure in Iraq meant that these plans, if indeed they were serious, were never pursued. The result has been a confused policy of confrontational rhetoric, belligerent posturing and occasional cooperation.

The second hallmark of Bush's Iran policy is neglect. The Administration has never really got down to working out a comprehensive Iran policy, which instead has remained largely reactive and driven by developments in America's Iraq and Afghanistan policies. This lack of focus was aggravated by splits in Bush's Administration, with the State Department traditionally advocating engagement and the diplomatic route and the hawks in the Vice-President's office and the Defence Department (under Rumsfeld) waiting for confrontation and blocking any serious prospect of engagement with Tehran. Consequently, whilst the Administration left diplomacy to the Europeans, it never threw its weight behind the EU diplomatic effort. With the bulk of the Administration's attention focused on Iraq, Afghanistan and the broader 'war on terror', the urgency of dealing with Iran one way or another has simply been absent.

However, Bush's wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq have profoundly transformed Iran's international environment with major implications for US-Iran relations. With the Taliban and Saddam Hussein removed from power and the Shia majority emerging as the dominant force in Iraq, Iran's strategic position has been boosted to a point that rulers in Tehran could only have dreamt about prior to 9/11. Iran is not only now surrounded by friendly regimes but it also wields considerable power both in Iraq and Afghanistan, which when added to its influence in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza essentially means that Tehran has emerged as a powerful regional actor in the Middle East. Ironically, Iran itself has done little to achieve this new status. It was the US that did the work. Leaving behind an emboldened, defiant and increasingly belligerent

Iran constitutes one of the gravest aspects of Bush's legacy.

With John McCain routinely threatening to bomb Iran and Barack Obama advocating diplomacy, Iran has figured as one of the key foreign policy issues splitting the two parties. However, in reality there is more that unites than divides them. Both Democrats and the Republicans insist that the military option must remain on the table and be seriously considered in case Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons becomes imminent. Both camps are united in calling for tougher sanctions as long as Iran does not suspend its work on enriching uranium. In the event that no consensus on sanctions can be established at the United Nations, Barack Obama and John McCain have both called on the EU to join them in creating a sanctions regime outside the UN framework.

Chapter 4: China policy: no revolution

Before 9/11 China was where Bush promised to leave his mark. He has not done this. At the beginning of his presidency Bush pursued a hawkish approach but this changed following the events of 9/11. On the whole, Bush's China policy has not been revolutionary and fits with the mainstream Republican tradition since the Nixon years. Bush retained a robust security posture in East Asia and reasserted the value of America's traditional alliances in the area, especially with Japan. Like all his predecessors Bush warned China against invading Taiwan, but he also stressed his support for the One-China policy. On trade Bush also followed the Nixonian tradition of drawing China into the global economy, despite the fact that this policy lost much of its support in the US.

There is, however, at least one aspect of Bush's approach to China that is new and which now seems to be generally and broadly accepted in the US. Bush's description of China as a competitor rather than a partner, that shocked some Democrats in 2000, has become a canon of political discourse in the US. McCain has long argued that China is a competitor and that Clinton's policy of treating it as a strategic partner was damaging to the 'strategic ambiguity' policy. But Barack Obama has also characterised US-China relations in similar terms.

The tone of the China discourse in the 2008 campaign is on the whole closer to Bush's more sceptical rhetoric known from his 2000 campaign than to Bill Clinton's optimistic pronouncements. China is overwhelmingly seen as a competitor, whether

from the point of view of the economy, energy markets or international security. During Bush's time in office the economic power of the US has declined in relative terms while China's has grown. In the last eight years China has become a serious player in international energy markets and is now the most influential actor in Africa. China's military modernisation and defence spending have also expanded beyond the level of its impressive economic growth. It is now generally assumed in the US that the twenty-first century will belong to Asia, with China being the leading power.

The differences between Republicans and Democrats in their view of China are overall minor and ultimately boil down to a question of emphasis rather than content. Democrats tend to emphasise China's economic threat and its currency policy. Obama promised to cosponsor a bill with Hillary Clinton to impose high duties on Chinese goods, intended to pressure China into reevaluating its currency. Obama also spoke critically about China's record on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). McCain, on the other hand, has tended to focus on hard security issues, arguing in favour of maintaining a robust military posture in East Asia aimed at 'hedging China'.

Chapter 5: Bush's legacy: the shape of things to come

This concluding chapter gives a summary of Bush's legacy in major policy areas (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Great Powers and Transatlantic Relations) as well as outlining those policies that may be taken up by Barack Obama or John McCain, whichever becomes the 44th President of the United States.

The chapter also outlines the expectations that the future American Administration may have *vis-à-vis* Europe:

Afghanistan: John McCain or Barack Obama will ask the Europeans to increase their presence in Afghanistan and boost their contributions to the country's reconstruction and development.

Iraq: An agreement negotiated by the Bush Administration with Iraqis is likely to mean that American combat troops will be pulled out by 2011, irrespective of who wins the elections. This timetable will probably be 'aspirational', meaning it may change, should the situation in Iraq dramatically deteriorate. However, for the time being it is the most likely outcome of the US-Iraqi negotiations. A more secure environment in Iraq will open up the possibility for

greater European involvement. This would also be welcomed by Washington.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: The transition period in the US will mean that a new team will not be able to focus on the issue until March or April 2009. A lack of international supervision could endanger the nascent Syrian-Israeli process and the progress achieved in talks between Israel's outgoing Prime Minister Olmert and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. This potentially creates an opportunity for the EU to step in, at least during the transition period. For example, the EU and the US should agree to nominate Javier Solana as a temporary mediator for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations from the end of 2008.

Iran: Both nominees are in favour of stronger sanctions against Iran. Since the US does not have meaningful economic relations with Iran its call for sanctions mainly has an impact on other powers and especially the EU. Should there be no agreement in the UN on the sanctions regime, the EU would find itself under pressure to join the US in pursuing a sanctions regime outside a UN framework. In the event of an Obama victory the EU would need to adapt to a new scenario in which the US would be fully engaged in the negotiating process.

Russia: Following the Georgian-Russian war US-Russia relations have turned more acrimonious. McCain has been decidedly more hawkish *vis-à-vis* Russia than Obama but they have both argued in favour of opening NATO to Georgia and Ukraine. Those European states that opposed NATO enlargement will find themselves under increasing pressure from Washington to change their positions. Although Obama has expressed some scepticism about Missile Defence, it is unlikely that the deal concluded by the Bush Administration and Poland during the Georgian crisis would be rescinded by a Democratic Administration. The overall approach of the future US Administration towards Russia is likely to be more assertive than the approach of the EU.

The *Chaillot Paper* ends with a call to the EU to develop its own policy expectations for the incoming administration. This should take into account the fact that there may be more continuity in America's next foreign policy than most Europeans may wish for.

Bush's revolution and its legacy

Introduction

George W. Bush is generally viewed as being a highly ideological president bent on implementing even the most unpopular and controversial of ideas. However, where Bush fits in with regard to American foreign policy traditions is a matter of dispute. During his 2000 campaign and in the first eight months of his presidency (before the tragedy of 9/11) Bush was viewed as a hard-headed realist – cautious about diplomatic and military engagement, sceptical about nation-building, unsentimental in his foreign policy decisions and an instinctive unilateralist. Towards the end of his first term, pundits started to describe Bush's foreign policy as 'neo-Wilsonian' and value-driven with a democracy-promotion agenda being its overarching objective. In other words, the realist became an idealist. But does that mean that Bush is a changed man whose caution disappeared amidst the ashes of the twin towers? Or perhaps Bush's foreign policy was from the outset more ambitious than was originally viewed while, at the same time, it was never intrinsically idealistic and neo-Wilsonian as some pundits have claimed.

There is no doubt that Bush's perspective on foreign policy altered after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon (although this is hardly surprising) and that after setting relatively modest foreign policy goals he came to embrace a larger transformative agenda. But, despite the challenge of 9/11 and the President's radical response to it, there is a strong element of continuity that runs through Bush's presidency.

This paper is based on the premise that Bush's foreign policy approach, whilst revolutionary in the post-war context, has been consistent with the ideology of American nationalism and hegemonism. While Bush's two predecessors, Bill Clinton and Bush's own father, dealt mostly with Cold War-related issues, whether managing the end of bipolarity or conflicts that originated from

the Cold War, George W. Bush was the first president that faced a completely new set of challenges that were not related to the Cold War. Bush was also the first president who felt comfortable with American hegemony and who lacked the instinctive attachment to alliances and organisations that characterised his predecessors since the end of the Second World War. This rupture with the post-1945 tradition of American foreign policy constitutes the essence of Bush's revolution.[1]

Towards the end of Bush's presidency the failure in Iraq and growing domestic discontent forced the President to moderate his tone and turn to allies for help, which some pundits interpreted as a clear indication that Bush's revolution was running out of steam. It is indeed likely that Bush's successor will be more disposed to work with allies and respect international organisations. However, it is also likely that there will remain a certain legacy of Bush's foreign policy that will be difficult for future Presidents to ignore. The roots of the revival of American hegemonism are, arguably, structural and as such it is likely that the echo of Bush's revolution will be felt beyond the current President's term.

The historical evolution of American foreign policy

American foreign policy thinking is often portrayed as gravitating between two extreme ideological poles – isolationism and internationalism. Keeping away from world affairs and avoiding entanglement in permanent alliances is certainly deeply entrenched in the American political psyche and has often been seen as an attractive option. It is generally believed that during its first decades this was the precise posture adopted by the young American Republic. The United States remained neutral during various European conflicts and it consistently avoided being drawn into alliances with either Britain or France or any other European power. George Washington's Farewell Address confirmed this isolationist course and expressed America's aloofness from the 'corrupt world'.[2] The Monroe Doctrine reconfirmed isolation as America's official foreign policy doctrine.[3]

However, according to some writers the general perception that during its early decades the United States was a peaceful and internationally uninvolved power is as deeply entrenched in the

1. Ivo H.Daalder and James M.Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (New York:Wiley & Sons, 2005).

2. 'Washington's Farewell Address 1796' (The Avalon Project at the Yale University, 1996), available at: http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/washing.htm.

3. 'Monroe Doctrine; December 2, 1823' (The Avalon Project at the Yale University, 1996), available at: http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/monroe.htm.

American psyche as it is mistaken. After all, whilst the Republic steered clear of European politics, it pursued an aggressive expansion into the North American heartland, driving out Native Americans and Mexicans as well as progressively pushing out the French, Spanish, British and the Russians. According to Robert Kagan, the United States was from its very outset an expansionist power, which was a natural result of American ideology and its political system. Kagan argues that there has always been a natural and powerful correlation between liberalism as a political system and expansionism in foreign policy. In the liberal Republic US leaders had limited powers over their peoples who, consisting of ambitious immigrant populations, were motivated by self-enrichment and unconstrained in their appetite for land-grabbing. Washington, Jefferson or Madison had no interest in changing this state of affairs but even if they had, arguably, there was little they could have done about it.[4]

Still, this early expansionism was initially restricted to the North American continent, which has often been seen as proof of the young Republic's relative non-belligerence and its limited foreign ambitions. But towards the end of the nineteenth century the growing Republic started to look outside the continent and the philosophy of imperialism made its way into American foreign policy discourse. The Spanish-American war in August 1898 was, in part, an outcome of this intellectual change and the growing confidence of the US. As a result of the war, the US became a colonial power, replacing Spain in the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico and to some extent Cuba, although the latter was granted independence.[5] Described in the US as 'this splendid little war', the conflict with Spain played an important domestic role – after years of bloody civil war the troops from the North and the South, including African Americans, stood united against a common enemy. But, more significantly here, the war marked the beginning of the United States' expansion outside the American continent, which brought it into direct competition with major European powers. There was also a strong ideological element in the decision to enter into this conflict. There was an official American anti-imperialistic stance: the US engaging in the defence of Cubans against their oppression by the Spanish was the official justification for entering into the conflict with Spain. But, perhaps more importantly, the war was the first foreign policy adventure based on the belief that the US had

4. Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation. America and the World 1600-1898* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).

5. The Platt Amendment voted by the Senate limited Cuba's independence by prohibiting it from signing treaties with other nations and establishing a permanent American base in Cuba at Guantanamo Bay.

matured into a global player and that the 'American dream' should be exported overseas.

America and the two World Wars: from isolation to engagement

Following the end of the First World War (in which the US joined only towards the end of hostilities), America emerged both victorious and more powerful than ever. Consequently, President Wilson threw his weight behind the development of a new world order, based on the principles of democracy, national self-determination and international law, all of which were meant to be governed by the first ever collective security organisation – the League of Nations. However, the League of Nations, and with it America's leadership, received a major blow when the Senate failed to ratify the US's membership in the organisation. The Senate's defiance of Wilson is usually seen as a triumph of isolationism over internationalism and idealism. Indeed in the following years America plunged into an economic crisis and disengaged from world affairs. However, during the actual debate on the League's membership the strongest opposition to Wilson's plan did not come, as is often believed, from isolationists like William E. Borah, who, though staunchly opposed to the plan, were in a clear minority even in those days.[6]

America's League membership was first and foremost opposed by conservative internationalists led by the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who supported the war with Spain and America's engagement in the First World War way before Wilson decided to join the allied powers. Lodge's problem with the League was not his aversion to America's international engagement – he was all for it. What Lodge resented were the possible limitations imposed by the League on America's freedom to act when and how it considered fit. Lodge was especially critical of the possibility of placing American troops under the League's command without having the approval of the US Congress. It was only when President Wilson refused to compromise on this point and a number of other amendments proposed in the Senate that Lodge turned against America's participation in this first-ever global multilateral organisation.

Lodge's support for America's expansive foreign policy combined with his aversion to externally-imposed constraints on its

6. See: William C. Widenor, *Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 300-48.

freedom of action made the Senator a precursor of American hegemonism and unilateralism, but not of isolationism. Lodge was a firm believer in American ideological superiority – being of the view that what is good for America is good for the world. In his speech against the League he argued: 'I must think about the United States first, and when I think of the United States (...) I am thinking of what is best for the world, for if the United States fails, the best hopes of mankind fail with it'.[7] A quintessential lawmaker and chairman of the Senate's Foreign Relations committee, Lodge never served in any administration. However, his views and actions came to be perceived as the most coherent expression of American nationalism and as such they represent one of the poles of American foreign policy ideology.

US foreign policy in the Cold War and post-Cold War eras

At the opposite end of the American debate is Wilson's vision of the US as the key driver of multilateralism. Wilson lost his battle: the US not only did not join the League of Nations but withdrew into self-isolation, from which it would only emerge after Pearl Harbour. However, with the dawn of the Cold War, the Truman administration chose to pursue a foreign policy not dissimilar to Wilson's. The American response to the Communist challenge was to contain the Soviets through building and leading a coalition of like-minded states. The Truman doctrine affirmed America's political and military commitment to the containment of Communism anywhere on the globe whilst the Marshall Plan became a tool of modernisation and democratisation in Western Europe. The Marshall Plan was, therefore, in essence following the Wilsonian approach, albeit without sacrificing any aspects of US sovereignty. The US built a network of western institutions – NATO, The World Bank, the OECD – as well as supporting the UN and the emerging project for European integration. The combination of its economic assistance, its promotion of liberal democracy and the attraction of its popular culture turned America into an effective transformative power in Western Europe and in East Asia-Pacific.

The approach designed by Marshall outlived Truman's administration. In time Western Europe, Japan and South Korea no longer needed American assistance and developed their own vibrant democracies. However, the US remained committed to

7. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Sr. 'Against the League of Nations', Washington D.C., 12 August 1919.

western integration and strengthening its alliances. The multilateral aspects of the Marshallian approach were, therefore, maintained throughout the Cold War and for the first decade after the end of the bipolar era by Presidents George Bush (Senior) and Bill Clinton. The end of the 1990s created, however, a new international environment for the US. With the growth of American power following the demise of the USSR, the world order became ever more unipolar while the rationale for Washington's continuing support for western integration was no longer apparent. Upon succeeding Bill Clinton, George W. Bush was faced with a choice of either reinventing the Marshallian approach and finding a new way for maintaining America's global leadership or pursuing a unilateralist and nationalist course. It had been clear even before George W. Bush became the 43rd President that he would choose the second option.

As argued by Ivo Daadler and James Lindsay, Bush belongs to the same foreign policy tradition as the founder of American unilateralism Henry Cabot Lodge.[8] Bush has never been a hard-headed realist uninterested in world affairs, nor has he become a new Wilson. His initial restraint about America's engagement may seem inconsistent with his subsequent decision to deploy the biggest number of US troops abroad since the Second World War and with his global transformative diplomacy agenda. However, both the initial caution and the subsequent, on occasion, frantic international engagement derives from the same ideological source – American nationalism. As advocated by Henry Cabot Lodge at the beginning of the twentieth century, Bush has consistently pursued an 'America first' policy throughout his presidency and remained defiant about safeguarding America's distance *vis-à-vis* multilateral actors.

On his arrival to power, 'America first' meant questioning the extent of America's involvement in the Balkans and concentrating on the development of a missile defence system that would make America safe from the hypothetical attack of a 'rogue state'. Towards the end of his presidency, Bush's version of 'America first' resulted in an ever-growing involvement in the Middle East and Central Asia without abandoning the missile defence project. Bush might have responded differently to a different situation; however, at no point during his presidency did he abandon his unilateralist streak and he has consistently refused to make his actions dependent on or even influenced by international organi-

8. Daadler and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, op. cit. in note 1.

sations, such as the United Nations or even NATO and America's traditional allies.

Bush's worldview before 9/11

Foreign policy did not play a major role in the elections in 2000 that brought George W. Bush to power. Likewise, the first months of Bush's presidency were focused on domestic issues – especially tax cuts – with no major foreign policy initiatives being pursued. Still, even in his pre-9/11 period Bush's foreign policy distinguished itself in clear terms from the approach of his predecessor President Clinton. It was also apparent that Bush's worldviews were driven by a set of ideological assumptions that, although not new to the American tradition, potentially constituted a break with the post-Second World War policy of international engagement and working with allies.

During the campaign Condoleezza Rice, acting as Bush's foreign policy spokesperson, presented the incoming team's priorities in an article significantly entitled *Promoting the National Interest*. Rice argued that under Bush's leadership, US foreign policy would remain internationalist but it would be more nationally focused. Naturally Rice was critical of Clinton's handling of foreign policy but she went well beyond that and challenged the entire Wilsonian tradition, which she caricaturised as based on 'the belief that the United States is exercising its power legitimately only when doing so on behalf of someone or something else'. In contrast to that, Rice argued in favour of a foreign policy characterised by a bold pursuit of national interests and declining sensitivity to world opinion.

Rice was especially critical of Clinton's policy of engaging the US military in humanitarian interventions, which, in her view, did not directly involve America's interests. With unusual bluntness, she argued that 'there is nothing wrong with doing something that benefits all humanity, but that is, in a sense, a second order effect'. Clinton's administration, according to Rice, not only lacked a focus (sending troops around the world every 9 weeks on average) but also it kept binding America to a nexus of multilateral agreements that did not serve the US's interests. Whilst being exceedingly critical of multilateralism, Rice argued in favour of concentrating on the Great Powers – especially China and Russia.

Rice correctly expected that the foreign policy she prescribed would be criticised as valueless and self-serving but she defended it on the grounds that a stronger America would benefit the wider world. This is based on the premise that the United States has a special role in the world (the view promoted earlier by H.C. Lodge) and that its values are universal and of benefit to all humanity.[9]

Whilst Rice and Bush himself kept their ideas at the level of generalities, the Republican base and some conservative commentators expected a major and immediate overhaul of America's foreign and security policy. The single most often voiced demand of the conservatives was the argument in favour of a more muscular and assertive defence policy. It was argued in this context that America was at the unique historical moment of being the only superpower and it was time for it to start behaving like one. It is therefore essential, argued the conservatives, to increase defence spending and protect American territory by developing a missile defence system. Bush did indeed hint during his campaign that defence spending would go up and he criticised Clinton for slimming down the military whilst at the same time stretching force deployments abroad.[10] The conservatives also expected a major change in relations with China, reorienting US foreign and security policy in a way that would counter Beijing's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region and ending Clinton's policy of reaching out to China. Finally, some powerful elements in the Republican Party advocated an immediate withdrawal from the Balkans and Bush suggested during his campaign that America should indeed scale down its involvement in the region and eventually leave it.[11]

At the beginning of his presidency Bush mostly disappointed these expectations. He continued with the $310 billion defence spending bill submitted by the Clinton administration and declined calls to increase it. During his campaign Bush staunchly supported the deployment of missile defence 'at the earliest date' possible, but after he became president he rejected the calls of conservatives who advocated an immediate withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty and he also failed to drastically increase funds for the project.[12] Instead, whilst declaring that the ABM treaty was a relic of the Cold War and as such that it must go, he also stressed that he intended to resolve the matter diplomatically and in consultation with Russian President Putin. Indeed during the US-Russian summit in Slovenia in June 2001 a sort of camaraderie was established between the two presidents, with

9. Condoleezza Rice, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000.

10. 'Bush Calls for End to U.S. Military Decline', *International Herald Tribune*, 22 August 2000.

11. The Second Presidential Debate, 11 October 2000. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/election/2000debates/2ndebate2.html.

12. On Bush's position on the issue during his campaign see: Governor Bush VFW Speech, Monday, 21 August 2000. Available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20010305034813/www.georgewbush.com/News/speeches/082100_vfw.html.

Bush singing the praises of Putin and famously declaring that he was able to get the sense of the Russian president's soul, a statement that, again, earned Bush much criticism from the conservatives.[13]

Bush initially pursued a tougher stance *vis-à-vis* China. He famously declared that unlike President Clinton he did not consider China a strategic partner but rather a competitor and that China policy would be the first policy he would change once he became President.[14] However, when confronted with his first crisis with China – the collision of the EP3 US spy plane with a Chinese fighter jet, killing the Chinese pilot, in March 2001 – Bush responded by pursuing traditional diplomacy and toning down his rhetoric. After 9/11 China came to be seen as a useful ally in the 'war on terror' and a much needed influence on North Korea.

Dismantling multilateralism

In the early days of his presidency, Bush's China and Russia policies as well as his defence policy suggested that American foreign relations would remain driven by traditional realist considerations not dissimilar to those pursued by the president's father. Indeed, the presence in the administration's key positions of individuals who had previously worked for George Bush Senior (including Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice) suggested a strong possibility of continuity with the former Republican administration, not least because Bush himself manifestly lacked foreign policy experience.

However, in relations with the Big Powers Bush reverted to traditional positions; on another, arguably even more significant plane, he remained consistent with his electoral promises. From the very outset, Bush set out to loosen links with multilateral organisations and agreements that his predecessors, especially President Clinton, had established, and increase America's scope for independent action. As promised by Rice during the presidential campaign, Bush withdrew the United States' signature from the Kyoto Protocol that was intended to deal with global warming by committing nations to limit their emissions of greenhouse gases. The treaty was signed by 84 nations and came into effect in 2005 but, with the United States remaining by far the biggest source of emissions, its abstention from the treaty rendered it

13. Press Conference by President Bush and Russian Federation President Putin, Brdo Pri Kranju, Slovenia, 16 July 2001; http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010618.html.

14. GOP Debate on the Larry King Show 15 Feb 2000. See: http://www.issues2000.org/Celeb/George_W__Bush_Foreign_Policy.htm#China.

close to meaningless. Neither Bush nor Rice made much of an effort to find a diplomatic reason for their rejection of the treaty, stating simply that the Protocol was not in the United States' interests and that this was all that mattered.[15]

Bush's administration applied a similar logic to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (signed in 1996 but rejected by the Senate in 1999), a new protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention and to the International Criminal Court (ICC), in all cases withdrawing or abandoning commitments made under the Clinton presidency. In the case of the ICC, Bush not only cancelled Clinton's signature (made in the last days of his presidency) but Washington also exercised pressure on other signatories to exempt US forces from being tried before the tribunal. These pressures were especially intense *vis-à-vis* new NATO members and often entailed threats of cutting US military support and exchange programmes with these countries.[16]

The end of the Clinton era was marked by a flurry of diplomatic and military commitments, including the Balkans, the Middle East peace process and negotiating a comprehensive settlement with Kim Jong Il's North Korea. During his campaign Bush clearly indicated that his foreign policy would be less 'engaged' and less diplomatically active. After becoming president, Bush acted as he had promised. With the exception of the Balkans, where Bush chose to prolong the presence of US forces, he did not 'pick up where Clinton left off'. For a long while critical of Clinton's engagement in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (which culminated in the failed Camp David talks in July 2000), Bush argued in favour of a 'hands-off' approach towards the Palestinian-Israeli question. Once elected, he decided against sending a US representative to the last-chance talks at Taba in Egypt in January 2001 and he eliminated the post of a Special Envoy for the Middle East that was held for years by seasoned diplomat Dennis Ross.

A similar approach was taken towards North Korea, where shortly before the end of the Clinton presidency Madeleine Albright was engaged in negotiating a comprehensive deal with the government of Kim Jong Il. This agreement was meant to indefinitely deny North Korea the possibility of using its nuclear programme for military means and production of N bombs as well as lead to a full normalisation of relations. President Clinton was invited to pay a visit to Pyongyang and apparently the deal was tantalisingly close.[17] But Clinton devoted his final weeks to the

15. 'Bush Defends Rejection of Kyoto Treaty', *NewsMax.com Wires*, 30 March 2001.

16. Romania was the sole state that budged under US pressure and signed a bilateral agreement exempting US military from extradition to the Hague.

17. Madeleine Albright, *Madame Secretary* (New York: Miramax, 2003).

Middle East peace process and the drama of the Florida ballot recount in December 2000 effectively suspended all diplomatic activity. As a result the Clinton Administration ran out of time and Bush simply chose to discontinue these efforts.

A few months into becoming Bush's Secretary of State Colin Powell committed his first gaffe, stating on the eve of the visit by the South Korean President that on North Korea 'Bush would pick up where Clinton had left off'. As it became embarrassingly clear to the Secretary of State that his statement did not reflect the President's thinking, on the following day Powell was forced to backtrack, saying 'I leaned too forward in my skis'.[18] On the same day, during the joint press conference with South Korean President Kim Dae Jung, Bush criticised Seoul's 'sunshine policy' of *rapprochement* with the North. Clearly scornful of Clinton's policy of engaging with the North, Bush chose instead inaction and in effect the further isolation of Pyongyang.

Neglecting the terrorist threat

Whilst hawkish and uncompromising in its relations with the so-called 'rogue regimes', Bush's Administration was strangely passive, if not outright negligent, in dealing with terrorist threats. In contrast to the Clinton years, which saw a growth of counterterrorist measures, in the pre-9/11 period, the Bush Administration relegated the importance of the issue. When first briefed by her National Counterterrorism Coordinator Richard A. Clarke about al-Qaeda and the threat it posed to the US, Condoleezza Rice gave an impression of both disinterest and ignorance. According to Clarke's account it was probably the first time that she had heard about the organisation. Focused on dealing with Cold War-type issues and relations with other states, Rice was in fact sceptical as to the future and relevance of Clarke's unit and what she called his 'strange portfolio'.

The position of Counterterrorism Coordinator was subsequently downgraded with its head no longer being a member of the Principles Committee (as had been the case during the Clinton years) and reporting instead to the committee of deputy secretaries. This change in effect meant that America's chief counterterrorist expert lost his direct access to the administration's most important officials, not to mention the President who, prior to 9/11, never requested to be briefed on terrorism. When, after a

18. Quoted in Fred Kaplan, 'Rolling blunder: how the Bush administration let North Korea get nukes', *Washington Monthly*, May 2004.

long delay, Clarke eventually managed to voice his growing conviction that an al-Qaeda attack on the US was imminent, it was made at the level of deputy secretaries. During the meeting the Deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, responded with scepticism to Clarke's warning and argued that rather than focussing on al-Qaeda, the counterterrorism team should concentrate on state sponsors of terrorism and first and foremost on Iraq.[19] The incident confirmed that the mindset of Bush's team was firmly state-centric, which meant that the importance of al-Qaeda was underestimated whilst attention was diverted to the alleged state sponsors of terrorism. This suggests that the possibility of confronting Iraq on the basis of flimsy or even downright fabricated evidence was probably considered by some senior administration figures even before 9/11.

On the eve of 9/11 Bush's foreign policy appeared to be largely consistent with his electoral promises. As such it was marked by the three following components: state-centrism and prioritisation of great powers, unilateralism and a scaling down of America's diplomatic and military engagements, especially in those areas that were considered unessential for American interests (such as the Balkans). The driving ideological force behind these attitudes remained American nationalism, interpreted in the manner resembling that of Henry Cabot Lodge. But, perhaps most importantly, foreign and security policy was not very high up on Bush's agenda. He promised a domestically-focused presidency and this is what he was delivering in his first eight months. According to some pundits, the developments of 9/11 fundamentally changed not only the nature of Bush's presidency but also his worldview.[20]

Bush's worldview after 9/11

There is no doubt that 9/11 profoundly transformed Bush's presidency. From a domestically-focused and rather embattled President with declining approval ratings, Bush suddenly emerged as a popular war leader. The shocked nation clearly craved moral leadership and bold vision. Bush's declaration of the 'war on terror', his Manichean rhetoric and frequent religious references responded well to this mood and, for a while, succeeded in rallying the traumatised nation behind the President. Bush's approval ratings went

19. Richard A. Clarke, 'Against All Enemies. Inside America's War on Terror' (New York: Free Press, 2004), p.231.

20. This, however, is not a universally shared view. For example see Daadler and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, op. cit. in note 1.

through the roof, reaching over 80%, with Congress approving the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with little dissent from the Democrats. Opposing the President was considered at the time unpatriotic, which meant that, until the fiasco in Iraq became apparent, the opposition was practically disarmed. Ironically, the president who had made his disinterest in foreign affairs an electoral asset became first and foremost a foreign policy president.

But did 9/11 transform Bush's worldviews? According to many pundits the answer is clearly affirmative. Some referred to him as a new Wilson, though it is doubtful that Bush himself would have been flattered by this comparison. Others argue that following the terrorist attack Bush became a neoconservative or that his foreign policy became driven by his religious beliefs. Few argued that while at times Bush's foreign policy was influenced by certain ideologies his overall outlook remained consistent with the approaches he pursued prior to the al-Qaeda attack.

Immediately after the attacks international public opinion expected the emergence of a new Bush, more inclined to work with partners and international institutions in the way his father did at the end of the Cold War and during the first Gulf War. Surely, the US must realise by now that it cannot 'do it alone', was the view expressed in capitals around the world. The terrorists who attacked the twin towers were mostly Saudis, some of them had lived in Europe – in Germany and France – and cooperation with Pakistan was essential to capture bin Laden and destroy al-Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan. It was clear that the terrorists ran a sophisticated international operation, hence, it seemed commonsensical that a robust international response would be required to capture the leaders and destroy their organisation.

The fact that world public opinion and leaders rallied behind the US in the first reactions to 9/11 was also expected to facilitate Bush's embrace of a genuinely internationalist response. The French newspaper *Le Monde* responded with the editorial entitled 'nous sommes tous Américains', the German Chancellor Schröder declared 'unlimited solidarity' and Tony Blair asserted that Britain would stand 'shoulder to shoulder with the US'. Condemnation of this terrorist act was universal, as indeed reflected in the United Nations resolution passed the day after the attacks and authorising 'all necessary steps' to prevent terrorist acts.[21] NATO evoked its collective defence article 5 for the first time in the

21. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001). See:http://www.un.org/sc/ctc/best_prac.html.

Alliance's history, effectively obliging its members to assist the US military in taking on al-Qaeda.

The drift towards unilateralism

However, Bush did not seize this chance to build a genuine international consensus around America's 'war on terror'. Rather than seeking to correct his image as an unreformed unilateralist Bush continued to pursue his strategy of loosening America's international obligations. In December 2001 the US withdrew from the ABM treaty and in the following months Washington blocked the adoption of the new protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. The bullying of new NATO member states to exempt the US military from International Crime Court jurisdiction continued as before.

The extent of the Bush administration's unilateralism was most strikingly revealed during the planning of the invasion of Afghanistan. NATO's offer of help was pretty much greeted with 'thanks but no thanks'. Referring to the Afghan operation the Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld famously argued that 'the mission determines the coalition', not the other way around – President Bush seemed to accept this logic.[22] This in practice meant that the US considered going through NATO a distraction and chose instead to strike alone with a handful of hand-picked trusted allies – the UK and Australia – which allowed the President to determine the operation the way he considered fit, with no need to engage with broader international opinion. 'At some point we may be the only ones left. That's OK with me. We are America', declared Bush in the first week after the terrorist attack.[23] Bush was already adopting the posture of America as a lone ranger in the 'fight against evil' even at a time when he was swamped with offers of help and support from all over the world.

Whilst Bush's instinctive unilateralism was in no way weakened (probably the opposite) by the experience of 9/11, the President proved capable of altering his views on some other issues. For example, the view that China and Russia represented the greatest challenge to US interests – argued both by Bush and Rice during the campaign – was revised. Russia especially became an instant ally; President Putin was the first foreign leader to call Bush with expressions of sympathy and an offer of help in response to 9/11. Indeed in the subsequent weeks the US came to rely on Russia's

22. See Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (Pocket Books: New York, 2003) pp.180, 306.

23. Quoted in ibid., p. 81.

intelligence and logistical support in planning the operation in Afghanistan. The Russian military's knowledge of the area, occupied by the Soviets until February 1989, was unmatched, as was Moscow's influence on the Northern Alliance (a loose warlords' alliance of non-Pashtun tribes opposing the Taliban rule). Russia even accepted US military bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, both of which were former Soviet Republics considered by the Russians to be in their sphere of influence. China could not offer a similar degree of cooperation but it passed on some valuable intelligence and overall it endorsed Bush's war on terror.

Bush responded by suggesting that a major reformulation of strategic relations might be under way. In the face of the common threat of terrorism the Great Powers had more incentive to cooperate than compete. Of course Bush characteristically added that competition would in any case be meaningless because of America's strategic advantage, but still there is no doubt that Washington's tone *vis-à-vis* Russia and China became considerably more conciliatory after 9/11.

But the shift away from focusing on Great Powers was not followed by a change of the administration's security thinking, which remained profoundly state-centric and dominated by paradigms originating from the Cold War. Terrorists replaced Communists, the 'empire of evil' was replaced by the 'axis of evil', which America had to counter before it would be attacked again. There was a determined insistence on the part of the administration's key figures – and especially Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz – that the terrorists could not have acted alone and were sponsored by other states and especially Iraq. After all, it was argued, bin Laden acted with the backing of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, which seemed to support the theory that terrorists needed a state support. Paul Wolfowitz revived the old theory that Iraq was behind the 1993 World Trade Centre bombings and questioned the CIA and FBI's conclusions that this had not been the case.[24]

Assertions like these were often denied by the intelligence community and in other circumstances they would have belonged to the realm of sensational literature with little chance to influence the administration's policy. But the country had been attacked, the nation did not understand why it had happened and it appeared that the administration had no idea either. Bush was scrambling for answers and his instincts drove him to look for uncomplicated solutions that would allow him to pursue decisive

24. Clarke, op. cit. in note 19, pp.231-2.

action and address the problem. In his immediate reaction to 9/11 Bush wrote in his diary 'The Pearl Harbour of the 21st century took place'; in his first words to the nation after the attack he said 'terrorism against our nation will not stand', which echoed his father's 'this will not stand' when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.[25] These first reactions suggest that Bush wanted to respond in an overwhelming way, that he was looking for a clear target and that Iraq was a likely candidate from the very outset to fit the role of a villain. These were, of course, just gut reactions but after all on many occasions Bush proudly described himself as a 'gut player'.[26]

Operation *Enduring Freedom*

America's first military response to al-Qaeda's attack, Operation *Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan, was widely seen around the world as justified and fully legitimate. Yet, the expectation that this war would bring about a 'new Bush' – an internationalist and promoter of good governance – would be proved wrong. There was little in the way this war was fought to suggest a meaningful change or even an indication that Bush's foreign policy thinking was evolving. In fact, if anything Operation *Enduring Freedom* marked the practical implementation and highlighting of some of the most outstanding aspects of Bush's ideology as they had been articulated during his presidential campaign in 2000.

The operation confirmed Bush's unilateralism as evidenced in the fact that he preferred to conduct it without NATO although he had the choice to do otherwise. During the campaign Bush pledged restraint in deploying troops abroad. The Afghan war was primarily a CIA operation, largely conducted by arming the Northern Alliance and exploiting anti-Taliban sentiment among the Pashtun tribes. The number of US troops involved on the ground remained relatively small (4,000 by January 2002) seriously hindering US ability to capture bin Laden and leading to the Tora Bora fiasco.[27] Finally, Bush had spoken with scepticism about nation-building. Following the war, the administration was initially very reluctant to get involved in the political process in Afghanistan. Later, faced with the realities on the ground, this position evolved but the US commitment to the nation-building and stabilisation process in Afghanistan has been seen as half-hearted and insufficient. The only serious change was shifting from scepticism (as expressed during the election campaign) to

25. Woodward, op. cit. in note 22, pp.16 and 37.

26. Quoted in Bob Woodward, ibid.

27. 'Operation Enduring Freedom – Order of Battle'. See: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/enduring-freedom_orbat-01.htm.

cooperative relations with Russia, which was of invaluable help in the run-up to and during the operation.

A further indication of Bush's post-9/11 ideology came in the form of the Security Strategy published in September 2002. In the President's own words the Strategy was built around three key tasks: 'fighting terrorists and tyrants', 'building good relations amongst great powers' and 'encouraging free and open societies' around the world.[28] Clearly, considering the document's timing, the foremost important objective was dealing with terrorism. It is significant, especially with hindsight, how the Strategy bundled up terrorists and state sponsors or 'rogue states' together. When mentioning the danger of terrorism the Strategy almost always referred to states – warning that it would 'make no distinction between terrorists and those who knowingly harbour or provide aid to them' and arguing that the gravest danger to US security is 'the overlap between states that sponsor terror' and terrorists pursuing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). This conjunction effectively meant that tackling terrorist danger was defined in the Strategy as much, if not more, in terms of disarming the alleged state sponsors/rogue states as in terms of improving homeland security and chasing al-Qaeda. In fact, beyond the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the strategy had little new to say on the subject of internal security.

The doctrine of pre-emption

Contrary to this, a thoroughly new measure – and one that was perhaps the most emblematic of Bush's revolution – was announced for dealing with the alleged state sponsors: *the doctrine of pre-emption*. The Strategy was not consistent on the question of circumstances justifying the use of the doctrine. Whilst developing a legal justification for the measure, the Strategy provided a fairly benign and conservative interpretation of the notion, arguing that when faced with an imminent danger, defined here as 'mobilisation of armies, navies, and air forces preparing for attack' it is legitimate for nations to act pre-emptively. If defined exclusively in this way the pre-emption would bring little that is new or objectionable to international relations.

However, when addressing the doctrine's actual application the Strategy was much broader in defining the limits and grounds for action. Most importantly, the Strategy argued that the US

28. See Bush's introduction to 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America', September 2002.

would act pre-emptively against 'any state sponsor of terrorism which attempts to gain or use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or their precursors'. The Strategy also made it clear that whilst 'the United States would strive to enlist the support of the international community' it would not hesitate to act alone – pre-emptively if necessary. As the subsequent developments, and especially the war in Iraq, demonstrated this already extremely liberal definition of circumstances allowing the US to act pre-emptively was in practice stretched well beyond the limits set out in the Security Strategy. No proof was needed, but a mere suspicion – erroneous as it turned out – that Iraq was a state-sponsor of terrorism and that it possessed WMD, to apply the doctrine of pre-emption and invade Iraq.

The other major innovation of the Strategy is the concept of a *coalition of the willing*, which needs to be seen in the context of both the war in Afghanistan and the international opposition to the invasion of Iraq. In his introduction, George Bush spoke about the coalition of the willing as an *augmentation* of permanent international institutions such as NATO, the UN and the World Bank. However, in its subsequent parts, the Strategy uses the concept in a broader and more central sense. In fact, the coalition of the willing is portrayed as the key instrument governing America's relations with alliances and other powers. The document explicitly argues that 'America will implement its strategies by organising coalitions (...) of states able and willing to promote a balance of power that favours freedom', which in effect meant that in order to achieve its objectives the US's preference would be to join forces with individual states rather than permanent alliances. As it turned out, the coalition of the willing built around the invasion of Iraq came to be portrayed by the administration as equally legitimate as, if not more legitimate than, international institutions. The existence of the pro-US coalition, consisting of 48 states, was thrown in the face of those who argued that the US was acting unilaterally.

A few months after the publication of the National Security Strategy, in March 2003, the US invaded Iraq. The doctrine of pre-emption was applied. The US acted in defiance of a broad international opposition and without an UN mandate but it was supported by the 'coalition of the willing' countries. The Strategy announced some revolutionary measures and Bush delivered what he had promised. US foreign policy was changing in a radical

way but the change was not inconsistent with the view of international relations that Bush had outlined before 9/11.

The essence of the Bush revolution and its legacy

The dominant view of George W Bush's presidency is that in response to the shock of 9/11 he evolved from a hard-headed realist into a neoconservative idealist. This view needs considerable qualification. None of the principal members of Bush's team was known as a neoconservative. State Secretary Colin Powell, a former Chief of Staff under Presidents Bush Senior and Bill Clinton, and by far the most moderate member of the administration, was, if anything, overly cautious of military engagement. Powell was overall inclined to pursue the foreign policy of continuity. Vice-President Cheney, Defence Secretary Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Rice had reputations for being Cold War hawks but certainly not for being democracy-promoters with the grand ambition of reordering the Middle East. The CIA Director George Tenet was a Democrat appointed by President Clinton – one of the very few members of Clinton's administration that survived the transition to the Republican administration. The neoconservatives in Bush's administration – such as Paul Wolfowitz or Douglas Feith – did not make it beyond the government's second tier and their position never evolved, at least formally, into joining the ranks of the principal decision-makers. Almost all known neoconservatives left the administration at the end of Bush's first presidency. From the purely formal point of view, the influence of the neoconservatives on the administration is therefore at best debatable.

On the other hand, the view that Bush would conduct a foreign policy reminiscent of his father's realism was from the outset 'unrealistic'. Bush's father's biggest challenges were managing the end of the Cold War and dealing with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait – he coped with both of them skilfully and in close cooperation with other allies. However, at this point in time the utility of assembling broad international coalitions and working via international institutions was not seriously questioned in America. The view that the US led the West in a competition against the Soviet Union and that it needed the West to manage the emerging post-Soviet security environment was still prevalent amongst foreign policy elites.

But with the definite end of the Cold War, the emergence of new threats and the growth of America's power during the Clinton era, the temptation of unilateralism grew throughout the 1990s. American elites always tended to view multilateralism as a means to achieve certain national objectives – especially the containment of the Soviet power – rather then an end in itself. Whilst the 'practicality' of international institutions – especially of NATO, the OECD and the World Bank – were obvious for the US as consolidating the West during the Cold War, the same has not been the case since 1990. In other words, during the Cold War one did not need to be a committed internationalist to be a supporter of western institutions. On the contrary, multilateralism, especially US-led multilateralism, was perfectly compatible with American nationalism. However, after the collapse of communism and the waning of the Soviet threat, believing in multilateralism started to be an article of faith in the US. This invariably meant that American nationalism began to have a unilateralist face.

For most Democrats, working with the allies and supporting international – especially western – institutions remained a natural instinct since the Cold War days. In addition, with President Clinton emphasising the role of 'globalisation', international institutions came to be seen as useful tools in managing global challenges and threats. The moderate Republicans, such as Colin Powell, continued to see the 'practicality' of alliances and international institutions but demanded their thorough reform to fit more closely with America's specific priorities. The conservative Republicans such as Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld – who once had been supporters of western institutions – started to question the utility of America's entanglement in permanent alliances that were constraining the US's freedom of action. George W. Bush was more or less drifting this way too.

The foreign policy team that Bush assembled after the December 2000 elections consisted of individuals who, with the notable exception of Colin Powell, were inclined towards unilateralism. The fact that all leading members of the team had extensive Cold War experience and, in many respects, Cold War mindsets, combined with their general conservatism meant that this administration tended to see security in traditional terms. The starting point for this administration was the priority of 'national interests', which tended to be interpreted in a rather narrow self-centred way.

The clear legacy of the Cold War thinking was state-centrism

and the prioritisation of relations with 'Great Powers'. The administration went out of its way to distance itself from Clinton's global agenda and the former president's inclination to perceive security in holistic, not exclusively military, terms. For Bush's people security was about military and state-sponsored threats. Their signature project was a missile defence system that was meant to make America self-sufficient and impregnable to attack from a rogue state. Of course, the downside of this view was a negligence of the threat posed by non-state actors, especially by terrorist networks.

At the beginning of Bush's presidency there was not a great degree of convergence between the views of this administration and neoconservatives. The latter wanted to expand America's military presence around the world and especially in the Middle East while Bush went to elections promising reductions in troops deployment. The neocons argued in favour of an expansive foreign policy and a reordering of the Middle East, Bush played down foreign policy and promised less, not more, 'engagement'. The neoconservative agenda was highly normative, putting democracy promotion at the heart of its Middle East strategy. During the 2000 elections Bush and Rice emphasised America's interests and criticised a normative, value-driven foreign policy.

Bush and the neocon agenda

Bush's response to 9/11 brought him closer to the neoconservatives. But does this mean that in the wake of 9/11 the neocons basically hijacked US foreign policy, as some commentators have indeed suggested?[29] Undeniably, there was a neoconservative moment in US foreign policy after 9/11. The threat to America came from sources that arguably could not be contained by traditional diplomacy and appeared to be linked to regional instability, religious fanaticism, authoritarian politics and failed statehood. The neoconservative argument of going out there and arranging the world so it would not threaten the US suddenly started to look attractive, not least because America had the military and financial means to do this. Bush's fixation with Iraq and his hostile rhetoric towards Iran were consistent with neoconservative arguments preached since the mid-1990s, as was the inclusion of 'democracy-promotion' as one of the chief principles of the 2002 Security Strategy.[30] Finally, the obvious pro-Israeli bias had also for years been advocated by the neoconservatives.[31]

29. For example see: Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, December 2003); Francis Fukuyama, *After the Necons: America at the Crossroads* (London: Profile Books, 2006).

30. William Kristol and Robert Kagan, 'Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy*, July/August 1996.

31. For the discussion on the influence of the pro-Israel lobby see: 'The War over Israel's Influence', *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2006.

There is no doubt that following the events of 9/11 neoconservative arguments made their way into the mainstream of US foreign policy thinking. But the arguments that the neoconservative agenda became the basis of Bush's foreign policy are exaggerated. It is true that Bush's foreign policy evolved after 9/11 but much of it remained in fact consistent with his earlier views. The circumstances and threats changed dramatically but US foreign policy remained state-centred, unilateral and focused on dealing with Great Powers just as it had been before. It is doubtful that the US would have invaded Iraq without 9/11 but the fixation with Saddam was not exclusive to the neocons or Bush. In fact, it was Bill Clinton's Iraq Liberation Act that laid the legal foundations for the invasion of Iraq and the regime-change policy.[32] Bush's decision to invade Iraq was overwhelmingly approved by Congress – with most Democrats joining the Republicans in authorising the war.[33]

It is certainly true that Bush became a convert to promoting democracy but it is far less clear to what extent this agenda has actually influenced policy. For example, the humanitarian and normative arguments did not figure amongst the official reasons for the invasion of Iraq. According to official documentation it was Iraq's non-compliance with UN resolutions that led to the war.[34] The political argument in favour of the invasion emphasised the threat of WMD allegedly possessed by Saddam and the unspecified link between the Iraqi regime and al-Qaeda. The humanitarian and democracy arguments had not really come into the debate until it became clear that there were no WMD in Iraq.

It is also significant that, especially in his second term, Bush has been often criticised by the neocons, sometimes even virulently. The neocons have generally attacked the administration for 'going soft', for its incompetence and last but not least for being unprincipled. Seeking agreement with North Korea or softening the stance on talking to Iran were seen by the neocons as signs of weakness and of a lack of resolve. The neoconservatives have also accused the administration of mishandling the war in Iraq, portrayed often as a half-hearted effort. According to the neocons, to win in Iraq the US should have at least doubled the level of US forces and stopped shifting the responsibility for security onto the Iraqis. In their view, the US should have also invested a comparable level of resources and energy in this conflict as it invested in the Second World War – only then would victory be guaranteed.[35]

32. Iraq Liberation Act of 1998: http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/US/Legislation/ILA.htm.

33. 'Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq': http://www whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021002-2.html

34. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-1.html.

35. Robert Kagan &William Kristol, 'Surrender as 'Realism', *The Weekly Standard*, 12 April 2006, vol.12, issue no. 12. Frederick Kagan, 'Choosing Victory: A Success Plan for Iraq', 5 January 2007: http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.25396/pub_detail.asp.

Finally, many neocons were displeased that so little has come out of the democratisation agenda. The US are still talking to and supporting the Saudis, the Egyptians and the other despots in the Middle East.[36] Bar the case of Uzbekistan, where the US forces were asked to leave following Washington's criticism of the crackdown on opposition there, little democratisation was pursued in Central Asia. Whilst China has not become more democratic and Russia has moved towards authoritarianism, the US has continued to privilege relations with both of them.

Bush and American nationalism

George W. Bush has flirted with some aspects of neoconservatism and his post 9/11 policy was influenced by this ideology but he never adopted it fully or even extensively and he certainly never became one of 'them'. Bush's revolution was not inspired by the neoconservatives, it owes much more to the tradition of American nationalism, and as such it is actually potentially more enduring, with its legacy more likely to affect US foreign policy beyond the end of Bush's term. There are three key aspect of Bush's revolution: self-sufficiency, unilateralism and, most radically, the doctrine of pre-emption. The best way of ensuring American self-sufficiency is the planned missile defence system that Bush promoted during his 2000 campaign and which was his signature project until 9/11. It is clear now that before he departs Bush wants to set this project in motion to the point of irreversibility.[37] Throughout his presidency Bush consistently applied the strategy of disentangling the US from international agreements and weakening its relations with international institutions. The war in Iraq is of course the starkest example of Bush's unilateralism but it is far from being the only one. Under Bush's presidency, America not only rejected a number of multilateral agreements but also its relations with its traditional allies were weakened.

Finally, there is the doctrine of pre-emption, which represents perhaps the most original, though also the most unfortunate, contribution of Bush to the philosophy of American nationalism. Arguably, there is nothing new in the concept of pre-emption understood as applying force with the purpose of pre-empting an immediate danger. For example, most British wars in modern history, including Britain's entry into the First and Second World Wars, were in essence pre-emptive. However, in the case of Iraq the

36. For example see Daniele Pletke, 'One Harmful Handshake', *New York Daily News*, 20 February 2007.

37. See: 'Proposed U.S. Missile Defence Assets in Europe', Department of State and Department of Defence, 07-MDA-2650, 15 June 2007.

circumstances were very different. The US was not threatened by Iraq and it was successfully containing Saddam's policy in the region. The argument in favour of the invasion still emphasised the danger posed by Iraq and its alleged WMD programme. But in the absence of any WMD and the apparent lack of evidence that Saddam's regime was in any way implicated in 9/11, the sole objective of the war in Iraq became regime change.

Whoever becomes Bush's successor will find it difficult if not impossible to ignore these key aspects of Bush's foreign policy. The appeal of making America's defence self-sufficient cannot be underestimated by any presidential candidate. First conceived by Ronald Reagan's Administration, the idea of a missile defence system was developed during the Clinton Administration. The programme enjoys bipartisan support, although admittedly from the Democrat side this endorsement is often tepid, conditional and sometimes purely rhetorical. In any case the missile defence system is likely to be continued by the successive Administrations, although the degree of the future president's commitment may be weaker than that of the present one.

America's attitude towards international law and organisations has always been different from the attitudes prevailing in Europe. With the end of the Cold War, the benefits of submitting the US to the rules of international cooperation are no longer obvious for the world's leading superpower. George W. Bush's administration is likely to be remembered as an extreme example of a leadership actively hostile towards multilateralism. However, it is worth remembering that the Europeans began to accuse the US of unilateralism (including the use of the famous term *hyperpuissance*) already during the Clinton administration. In addition, even if America's future president is a committed multilteralist (as arguably Bill Clinton was) he would be likely to be tempered by Congress. After all, Clinton signed a number of multilateral agreements that were then rejected by the legislators. The failure of Bush's Iraq policy is likely to make the Americans more open to international cooperation. However, it is doubtful that the temptation of unilateralism will abate as long as the US remains the world's leading power.

It is unlikely that Bush's successors would be tempted to wage another war in the name of regime change. But this does not mean that the doctrine of pre-emption is already dead and beyond resurrection. It is wholly possible, for example, that the US may at

some point undertake a pre-emptive operation to disarm a terrorist network operating in another country. This would be more likely to be a small-scale operation, not necessarily involving the military but, for example, the CIA. But there is no doubt that as long as the objective of such an operation were credible and defined in terms of protecting the homeland, there would be a domestic consensus to use force pre-emptively.

Conclusion

George W. Bush has become a very unpopular president – in September 2007 only around 30% of Americans approved of Bush's performance.[38] The President's popularity is now at a historically low level, even below the dismal record set by Jimmy Carter at the time of economic downturn and the Iran hostage crisis in the late 1970s. Dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq was the major cause for the Republican defeat during the Congressional elections in November 2006, which returned a Democratic majority to both the Senate and the House of Representatives, in the latter case for the first time since 1994. The Democratic Party is now emboldened and no longer receptive to the Republican charges of its alleged lack of patriotism. In 2002 a majority of Democrats voted in favour of the war in Iraq; now many of them have renounced that position and some have even apologised for their endorsement of the war.

The former president Jimmy Carter called Bush the worst president ever in US history. Considering Carter's rather dismal record during his own presidency, it is a moot point whether he was the best qualified person to judge the current president. However, this unusual comment in American political culture sparked an interesting debate in the US. As Christopher Caldwell observed, whether the presidents were successful or not is ultimately gauged by whether they left the country better off than when they inherited it from their predecessors.[39] By all accounts Bush is leaving the country in a worse state than when he took it over from Bill Clinton. The economy is unstable not least because Bush turned Clinton's budget surplus into one of the biggest deficits in American history. Once a beacon of progress and hope, America has lost much of its 'soft power' around the world. If Caldwell's criteria were to be applied – and there is no reason why they should not –

38. See: www.pollingreport.com/BushJon.htm.

39. Christopher Caldwell, 'Who was the worst of all?', *Financial Times*, 25 May 2007.

there is little doubt that George W Bush's presidency has indeed been a failure.

But does all this mean that Bush's presidency was an episode causing havoc in international relations but otherwise leaving little mark on American history? This is unlikely. The election of Bush coincided with a radical change in foreign policy thinking and the general perception of America's role in the world. Bill Clinton's foreign policy dealt mostly with the remnants of the Cold War and the former president's mindset was still influenced by a view of the world order where the US led alliances and worked collectively with international institutions and allies. Bush came to power announcing the definite end of the Cold War. The idea preached by Bush and his advisors was that America would no longer compromise for the benefit of alliances or agreements that did not directly address its interests. In saying this, Bush was hardly alone. The unipolar world order based on America's unchallenged superiority came into being during the Clinton presidency. Like his predecessors, Clinton chose to pursue the cooperative (Marshallian) approach to foreign policy, although he did not have to. President Bush did otherwise. His successors would find it hard not to follow in his footsteps. In fact, even President Clinton was on occasion forced by Congress to apply a unilateral approach.

Bush may have been an extreme example of American nationalism and he has not been the most competent of presidents. However, crucially, the policy approach he pursued was not just of his own making. It has been very much an outcome of America's unchallenged military and economic superiority coupled with ideological change that occurred in America in the late 1990s. The three key aspects of Bush's revolution – self-sufficiency, unilateralism and pre-emption – may be pursued in the future even by the President's current critics.

Iraq

Introduction

George W. Bush will be remembered first and foremost for starting the war in Iraq and the destabilisation of the country that ensued. Despite the success of the 'surge' policy, which Bush adopted in the wake of the Congressional elections won by the Democrats in November 2006, the situation in Iraq is still extremely grim and the political process there is fragile. Before the 'surge' was adopted thousands of people were being killed every month, four million Iraqis had left the country and the economy had totally stagnated. America's regional adversary, Iran, has been strengthened and its allies, moderate Sunni states, have been weakened. Most importantly, the war in Iraq has not diminished the terrorist danger. On the contrary, since the invasion of Iraq the activity of al-Qaeda cells has been on the rise, with some terrorist attacks, such as those in Madrid in March 2004 and in London in July 2005, being explicitly motivated by the war. Al-Qaeda has also become a force in Iraq and in Northern Africa where some of the indigenous radical groups are influenced by its ideology.

However, following the success of the surge Iraq is no longer beyond hope. The security situation has improved markedly. In a symbolic move, in September 2008 the Iraqi army took control of the Anbar province – once the most deadly place in the country and the heartland of the Sunni insurgency. The economy is benefiting from high oil prices and the reconciliation process, while fragile and extremely slow, is beginning to take root. However, as admitted by America's chief commanding officer in Iraq, General David Petraeus, the progress made in Iraq since mid-2007 is by no means irreversible.

Before the economy became the core theme of the American 2008 presidential race, the elections were set to be a referendum on Iraq. Indeed both John McCain and Barack Obama clinched their nominations largely because of their positions on Iraq. As a long-

term advocate of the surge, McCain clearly benefited from the policy's success. At the same time Obama was the only heavyweight Democrat in the field who opposed this war from the start. During the campaign McCain argued in favour of staying in Iraq as long as necessary, even, as he put it, if it was to take one hundred years. On the other hand, Obama promised that if elected he would pull out all combat troops within sixteen months. The Iraqis themselves are demanding that the US withdraws its combat troops not later than 2011, which is closer to the fixed timetable suggested by Obama than to the 'aspirational' date of 2013 mentioned by McCain.[40]

This chapter deals with the past, present and the future of America's Iraq policy and is accordingly divided into three parts. Part one discusses US-Iraq relations prior to 9/11 and the run-up to the invasion following al-Qaeda's attack on the US. Part two addresses the situation in Iraq after the invasion. Part three discusses the prospects for the US's Iraq policy in the context of the 2008 presidential elections.

The war

The prelude

There would have been no invasion of Iraq in 2003 without the first Gulf War and especially had it not been for its inconclusive end. Following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the 41st President of the US, George H. Bush, successfully assembled a broad international coalition and secured a mandate of the UN Security Council to respond to the Iraqi aggression. The operation 'Desert Storm' lasted only over a month, from 17 January 1991 until 28 February 1991, and involved the participation of 34 allies, with Saudi Arabia and Egypt being among the biggest troop contributors. The Allies quickly overwhelmed the Iraqi forces and there was no doubt that they were in a position to overthrow Saddam's regime. However, the UNSC resolution had authorised the allied response only to liberate Kuwait and not to invade Iraq.[41] In addition, many of America's allies, especially the Sunni Arab states, were vehemently opposed to regime change in Baghdad. Respecting the international consensus, President Bush ordered US forces to halt their advance 240km from Baghdad. This decision was destined to become one of the most disputed

40. Although the 2011 withdrawal deadline demanded by the Iraqis also is likely to be 'aspirational' rather than definite and it can be modified depending on the situation in Iraq.

41. For a full discussion of this topic see: http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/3448336.html.

ones in US history. In subsequent years the exhortation to 'finish the job in Iraq' became a rallying cry among the conservatives.[42]

George H. Bush's successor, President Clinton, initially maintained his predecessor's approach of containing Iraq. This policy involved economic sanctions, the patrolling of Iraqi no-fly zones imposed to protect Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south and inspections to prevent Iraqi development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The UN inspectors (UNSCOM) did indeed uncover a massive programme to develop biological and nuclear weapons and a large amount of equipment was confiscated and destroyed. Most prominently, the Al-Hakam germ warfare centre, which specialised in weaponising biological agents, was blown up by UNSCOM in 1996.[43]

However, by 1998 Clinton's containment policy found itself under double pressure. In Iraq Saddam was progressively limiting the inspectors' access to suspected facilities and demanding the lifting of the sanctions. At home, Clinton's Iraq policy was increasingly criticised for lacking effective instruments and for its excessive reliance on sanctions. A group of conservatives from the Project for the New American Century, including Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol, Zalmay Khalizad, Donald Rumsfeld and Francis Fukuyama, issued a letter to President Clinton calling for a policy change *vis-à-vis* Iraq. The letter called for a new strategy and military action against Iraq, with its ultimate objective being the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. The authors contended that the existing UN resolutions gave the US sufficient authority to pursue a military option. In any case, argued the letter, 'American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.'[44]

By August 1998 Iraq had hardened its restrictions on the movement of inspectors and stopped co-operating. In response to this, Clinton's Iraq policy started to shift from containment towards the 'regime-change' option. In October 1998, the US Congress passed and President Clinton signed the 'Iraq Liberation Act'. The legislation provided $97 million for Iraqi opposition groups and stood in sharp contrast to the UN Security Council resolution 687, which focused on the weapons programme and did not mention regime change.[45] Amidst controversy, the UN ordered UNSCOM to leave Iraq on 16 December 1998. Within a few hours of the withdrawal of UNSCOM, the US and the UK launched a bombing campaign against Iraq called Operation Desert Fox,

42. 'Project for the New American Century', http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm.

43. Ben Arnoldy and David S. Hauck, 'The Inspections Maze', *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 2002. See: http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/inspections/suspicions.html. See also 'United Nations Special Commission': http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNSCOM.

44. 'Project for the New American Century', op. cit. in note 42.

45. 'Clinton Signs Iraq Liberation Act', http://www.fas.org/news/iraq/1998/11/01/981101-in.htm.

which lasted only three days and concluded on the first day of Ramadan. However, the operation did not weaken Saddam, nor did it satisfy the American conservatives who criticised it as a typical Clinton half-measure.

In the run-up to the 2000 presidential elections, Republicans accused Clinton of 'doing too little, too late' *vis-à-vis* Iraq. The Republican Platform 2000 called for the full implementation of the Iraq Liberation Act and an active policy aimed at removing Saddam Hussein from power.[46] However, before 9/11 Bush's Iraq policy differed only marginally from his predecessor's and there was no particular push towards 'regime change' or indeed towards empowering the Iraqi exile groups. The only meaningful change was to replace the existing sanctions with the so-called smart sanctions that allowed for greater flexibility in trading civilian goods, but tightened control on military goods. In other words it is very unlikely that the war in Iraq would ever have taken place without the al-Qaeda attacks on 11 September 2001.

Run-up to the invasion

The events of 9/11 altered Bush's views on Iraq to the point that he allied himself overnight with the radical 'regime change' rhetoric preached by the conservatives from the Project for the New American Century, most of whom by now were serving in his Administration. Bush was careful not to blame Iraq explicitly for 9/11 and he continued to stress his preference for a diplomatic solution. However, there is ample evidence now suggesting that the President embarked on the path to war soon after 9/11 and before the diplomatic route had been exhausted.[47]

Although lacking evidence, members of Bush's administration – including Vice-President Cheney – continued to link Iraq to al-Qaeda and the terrorist attacks on the US. The Administration's propaganda on this issue was so effective that as late as two years after the 9/11 attacks seven out of ten Americans still believed that Saddam Hussein was behind the attack.[48] Bush himself was careful not to explicitly raise such a claim but in his speeches he often juxtaposed Iraq and al-Qaeda in a way that suggested a link between the two. For example, his victory speech aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, in which he (erroneously as it turned out) announced the end of major combat operations in Iraq, was in fact predominantly focused on the war on terror with 9/11 firmly in

46. See: http://edition.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/conventions/republican/features/platform.00/#53.

47. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

48. 'Hussein Link to 9/11 lingers in many minds', *Washington Post*, 6 September 2003.

the background. During his speech Bush declared: 'The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001 and still goes on (...) The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We have removed an ally of al-Qaeda and cut off a source of terrorist funding'.[49]

Clearly, words like these have contributed to the public's view of the war as being directly linked to 9/11. This was further reinforced by claims by Vice-President Cheney who accused Iraq of cooperating with al-Qaeda in preparing the attacks. In late 2001 Cheney said that it was 'pretty well confirmed' that attack mastermind Mohammed Atta, who died in the 9/11 attack, met with a senior Iraqi intelligence official in Prague. A leading neo-conservative, Richard Perle, who was chairman of the Pentagon's Defence Policy Board, argued that the evidence of Iraqi involvement was 'overwhelming'. Claims like these were mostly rejected by the intelligence community, yet little of this official scepticism actually filtered through to public opinion, whilst Cheney's claims and Bush's allusions, fitted in with the general perception that Iraq was behind the attacks.[50]

Still, the evidence on Iraq's link with al-Qaeda was too thin to serve as the official justification for the war, although Bush again alluded to this issue in his letter to Congress on the day of the invasion.[51] Ultimately, however, it was Iraq's alleged possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the possibility that these weapons could be transferred to terrorists, that was put forward by the Administration as the reason why the US had to go to war. In his State of the Union address in January 2003, which was largely dedicated to making the case for invading Iraq, the President said: 'With nuclear arms or a full arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, Saddam Hussein could resume his ambitions of conquest in the Middle East and create deadly havoc in that region. Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al-Qaeda. Secretly, and without fingerprints, he could bring a day of horror like none we have ever known (...) Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans – this time armed by Saddam Hussein.'[52]

That Iraq possessed WMD and was unwilling to disarm was a universally shared view which was supported by former President Clinton, the CIA and American Congress, which authorised the President to go to war against Iraq on those grounds in its resolu-

49. 'Bush makes historic speech aboard warship', CNN, 1 May 2003. See: http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/.

50. 'Hussein Link to 9/11 lingers in many minds', *Washington Post*, 6 September 2003.

51. 'Text of a Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate', 18 March 2003. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-1.html.

52. President Delivers 'State of the Union', Office of the Press Secretary, 28 January 2003. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html.

tion on 2 October 2002. This resolution was endorsed by the majority of Democrats, including the future presidential contenders John Kerry, Hillary Clinton and John Edwards.[53] In fact, even the critics of the war, Germany and France, did not dispute that Iraq possessed WMD and this claim was well grounded in the reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the findings of weapons inspectors who found evidence of WMD programmes before they left Iraq in 1998. It seems with hindsight that Saddam's deliberate ambivalence about the WMD programmes, which he no longer had, proved to be one gamble too many for the Iraqi leader.

Timeline: From The First Gulf War to the Second

- 1991 - Conclusion of the Gulf War. Measures against the regime of Saddam Hussein include: economic sanctions, no-fly zones in northern Iraq and UN inspections.
- August 1998 - Iraq stops cooperating with UNSCOM inspectors.
- October 1998 - The US Congress passes and President Clinton signs the 'Iraq Liberation Act'.
- November 1998 - Operation 'Desert Fox' - the US and the UK bomb selected sites in Iraq to counter a suspected Iraqi WMD programme.
- November 2000 - George W. Bush is elected President. His team includes Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, all 'hawks' and known advocates of invading Iraq.
- 11 September 2001 - terrorist attacks on the US. Bush's Administration begins to prepare the invasion of Afghanistan and, shortly after, of Iraq.
- September 2002 - Security Strategy: doctrine of pre-emption.
- October 2002 - US Congress passes a 'Joint Resolution to Authorise the Use of the United States Armed Forces Against Iraq.'
- 8 November 2002 - UN Security Council unanimously passes the resolution 1444 offering Iraq 'a final opportunity to comply with its disarmaments obligations.'
- February 2003 - Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses the UN General Assembly presenting alleged evidence of WMD programmes in the US. Following the address, the US, UK and Spain propose a UN Resolution authorising the use of force in Iraq. The proposal is withdrawn amidst the lack of international support.
- 18 March 2003 - the US and its allies invade Iraq without the mandate of the UN.

53. 'Joint Resolution to Authorise the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq', op. cit. in note 33.

After the war

'Freedom's untidy' – Donald Rumsfeld, April 2003

The invasion of Iraq lasted from 18 March to 1 May 2003 and it was led by the US (120,000 troops), backed by the UK (45,000 troops) and smaller contingents from Australia, Denmark and Poland. The US and the UK forces managed to topple the Iraqi government and take control of large cities in only 21 days while suffering minimal losses (mostly in fact from 'friendly fire') and avoiding large Iraqi civilian casualties or even a high number of dead Iraqi soldiers. The invasion was by all accounts a remarkable military success, which was achieved with a relatively small force. The much larger Iraqi forces (350,000) practically disintegrated in the face of the US-led assault, with many of the Iraqi units surrendering without putting up a fight, sometimes even seeking out US and UK forces to whom they could surrender, and entire units disbanding and disappearing into the civilian population.

On 1 May 2003, President Bush landed aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* to declare the end of major combat operations in Iraq. Bush spoke against the background of a banner that proclaimed 'Mission Accomplished'. But even as the President spoke, the looting and civilian unrest continued. It soon became apparent that the small size of the occupation force, whilst sufficient to win the war against the demoralised Iraqi forces, was totally inadequate to maintain law and order in Iraq. The US forces were also not trained to deal with civilian unrest and did not even have clear rules of engagement. As a result, they stood by while the looting continued. Matters were only made worse by the decisions of Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) who dismantled Saddam's Baath Party, banned top party members (between 30,000 and 50,000 people) from positions of authority and disbanded the Iraqi army, sending troops home with no pay.[54] The result of these decisions was catastrophic. Iraq was left with no security force of its own and a huge number of disgruntled ex-military with no jobs and no means of livelihood. The move was protested against by the chief of the Baghdad CIA office who, when Bremer informed him of his intention to disband the military, said 'that's 350,000 Iraqis you're pissing off, and they've got guns'. However his warning was to no avail.[55] There is little doubt now that Bremer's instructions fuelled the growing insurgency.

54. Interview with Paul Bremer, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yeariniraq/interviews/bremer.html.

55. Quoted in Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound. The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (New York: Wiley, 2005), p.176.

Within weeks of the invasion, it became clear that the US was completely unprepared for the so-called 'Phase IV' of the war – the post-Saddam reconstruction and stabilisation of Iraq. The post-war planning was conducted entirely by the Pentagon, which played down negative predictions on the situation in Iraq, aware that a gloomy picture of the post-Saddam reality could serve as a possible impediment to going to war. Warnings from the State Department, such as 'The Future of Iraq' report which had been completed before the war in 2002 and which cautioned about the possible unrest after the fall of Saddam, were dismissed by the White House and the Pentagon as painting an overly-pessimistic picture of the situation on the ground.[56] The Pentagon planners evidently assumed that the occupation force would be welcomed by the population and that the US-backed exiles from the Iraqi National Congress and especially Ahmad Chalabi would be able to take control of the country and turn it into a democracy and an ally within a short space of time. This optimism still prevailed in the early days after the invasion. For example, the head of the US invading force, General Tommy Franks, told the troops on 16 April 2003 to prepare for a takeover by a new Iraqi government within 60 days and a US withdrawal by September 2003.[57]

However, although the majority of Iraqis were happy to see the end of Saddam's regime, the widespread lawlessness and the near total lack of basic provisions soon turned the Iraqis against the occupation force. Two weeks after the end of the invasion the looting escalated beyond Baghdad, kidnappings and armed robberies became the norm whilst the occupation force could do little to prevent them. The situation was aggravated by severe shortages in the supply of electricity and water, which hit the population of Baghdad (five million people) in the middle of the summer heat. By the end of the summer, the lawlessness had given way to a full-blown insurgency, with car bombs and suicide attacks becoming daily occurrences.

Soon the US force was faced with a double challenge, with a violent Sunni insurgency in the Al-Anbar province and a Shiite insurgency led by the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mehdi army. The centrepiece of the Sunni insurgency – the city of Fallujah – also became a safe haven for the growing legion of mostly non-Iraqi al-Qaeda fighters and the stronghold of al-Qaeda's regional leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. The November

56. On the state department report see: http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/index.htm.

57. See: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yearini-raq/cron/

2004 US offensive against Fallujah, also called the second battle of Fallujah, was effective in as much as the insurgents lost control of the city, but it is believed that most foreign fighters managed to escape the city before the US assault. Most importantly, the relentless pounding of the city led to many civilian deaths and a massive population exodus as well as extensive damage to the city's infrastructure, including its mosques – 60 of which were completely destroyed. Whilst the US forces were confronting the Sunni rebellion, in August 2004 they were also confronted by the Shiia insurgency in Najaf and in Sadr City in Baghdad. By this point it was becoming clear that the US strategy in Iraq was not working and that the US military presence was a part of the problem.

Still, by the time of the next presidential elections, in November 2004, the gravity of the deteriorating situation in Iraq had not yet fully registered with the majority of the American public and Iraq remained perceived as George W. Bush wanted it to be perceived – as a frontline in the war on terror. The fact that Bush's Democratic contender, John Kerry, was a decorated war veteran did not help to boost the Democrats' national security credentials, which had remained weak since the war in Vietnam. Kerry's inconsistent stance on Iraq (he voted for the war but then campaigned against it) and his avoidance of security issues on the campaign trail only contributed to the view that the Democrats were unprepared to lead the nation at a time of war. Consequently, in November 2004 George W. Bush won a decisive victory and the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress.

However, from the beginning of Bush's second presidency, the public rapidly began losing its confidence in the war's rationale and in the President's ability to manage the crisis. In January 2005 US inspectors ended their search for weapons of mass destruction. It was now official that the rationale for starting the war was built on false evidence. From 2005 on support for the war among the American public began to decline dramatically, plummeting to less than 30% in 2006. Following the bombing of the Samarra mosque in February 2006, Iraq was thrown into a maelstrom of spiralling sectarian violence prompting top US commanders, including the head of US forces in Iraq, General John Abizaid, to warn that civil war was now possible.[58]

58. 'Head of U.S. command: Iraq civil war possible', CNN. Com. International. See: http://edition.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/08/03/iraq.hearing/.

Timeline: Iraq between the invasion and Rumsfeld's resignation

- April 2003: The fall of Baghdad only three weeks after the invasion. The statue of Saddam Hussein in central Baghdad is toppled by the Iraqis.
- 21 April 2003: Retired Lt. Gen. Jay Garner arrives in Baghdad to head the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA).
- 1 May 2003: President Bush delivers his 'mission accomplished' speech.
- 6 May 2003: Garner is replaced by Paul Bremer III who leads a new administrative entity - the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).
- 23 May 2003: After announcing deBaathification, the CPA disbands the Iraqi army.
- July 2003: The radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr begins preaching against the US occupation. His militia - the Mehdi army - gains strength.
- 19 August 2003: Truck bomb destroys UN Headquarters in Baghdad.
- 13 December 2003: Saddam Hussein captured.
- 6-9 April 2004: Fallujah offensive
- 27 April 2004: The Abu Gharib scandal erupts.
- 28 June 2004: CPA transfers sovereignty to the Iraqi Governing Council, Bremer leaves Iraq.
- November 2004: the most deadly month for US forces: 137 US soldiers die.
- 12 January 2005: The WMD search in Iraq is declared over. No WMD were found.
- 22 February: Golden Mosque in Samarra damaged in a bomb attack that fuels sectarian violence.
- 25 May 2006: Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki forms Iraq's first permanent government since the fall of Saddam Hussein.
- August 2006: the deadliest month for Iraqi civilians: 3,438 die.
- 7 November 2006: with public discontent over Iraq a major factor, Democrats win the Congressional elections. Rumsfeld resigns as Secretary of Defense.

The Baker/Hamilton Report and the 'Surge'

In January 2007 the number of American casualties reached 3,000. The war costs escalated to $8 billion per month, with the overall figure reaching $2 trillion. Iraq disintegrated into civil war, with Iraqi deaths surpassing 2,000 a month (and reaching 3,014 in February). The economy remained moribund. The American public turned against the war and Bush's own approval ratings declined

sharply. Discontent with the situation in Iraq had proved a major factor in the Congressional elections on 7 November 2006, which returned a Democrat majority in both Houses.

Both parties and the Administration recognised that a change of policy was needed. In March 2006 the Congress supported the creation of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group (ISG) co-chaired by James Baker and Lee Hamilton, which delivered its recommendations shortly after the Congressional elections on 7 December 2006.[59]

The ISG report proposed fundamental changes in the four following areas:

- *Introduction of milestones/benchmarks* – the continuation of US support for the Iraqi government should be made conditional on Baghdad meeting a number of 'milestones' concerning, among others, reconciliation, sharing of oil revenue and dismantling of sectarian militias.
- *US military presence* – progressive scaling down of the US military presence, replacing combat with training units and delegating the initiative to the Iraqis. All combat units could be withdrawn in 2008.
- *Iran and Syria* – The US should involve Iraq's neighbours, including Iran and Syria, in finding a diplomatic solution to the crisis.
- *Arab-Israeli conflict* – A renewed US commitment to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace on all fronts, including a two-state solution, as well as dealing with Lebanon and Syria.

One month after the publication of the Baker/Hamilton report, on 10 January 2007, President Bush announced his own programme for Iraq which, while adopting some selected recommendations of the Baker/Hamilton proposal, differed from it both in spirit and in the majority of its policy proposals. The Baker/Hamilton report was painfully realistic, even gloomy and at its heart was a tacit acknowledgment that this war could be lost.[60] In order to avoid defeat and an implosion of the region into even a bigger crisis, the ISG recommended that the US change its policy in fundamental ways.

In contrast to this, Bush's review was based on the assumption that victory was the only option – reforms and modifications were needed but not a fundamental policy change. Bush's plan took on board the idea that the Iraqi government should be pushed to

59. James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton (co-chairs), *The Iraq Study Group Report. The Way Forward – A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, December 2006).

60. In their introduction, Baker and Hamilton write 'No one can guarantee that any course of action in Iraq at this point will stop sectarian warfare, growing violence, or a slide towards chaos.'

tackle violence within the country and it also set some milestones/benchmarks but, in contrast to the ISG, it did not threaten to withdraw US support (finance, etc) if these were not met. On the question of the US military presence, Bush's plan completely contradicted the ISG recommendations. Rather than scaling down it proposed a 'surge', deploying an additional 21,500 troops (17,000 of them to Baghdad) and it did not set any time limits.[61] Bush's proposal mentioned engaging other regional powers but it specifically rejected talking to Iran and Syria. In fact, rather than a *rapprochement* Bush offered only new threats to Tehran and announced a greater military US presence within close proximity to Iran.[62] Finally, the Administration's plan made no mention of the Arab-Israeli conflict or the idea of America's engagement in the peace process.

Bush's plan also announced a number of modifications regarding cooperation with Iraqi forces and the management of reconstruction efforts, including:

- *Pairing of Iraqi and American Units* to protect population centres, starting with Baghdad. Once so protected, these population centres would become sites of increased economic activity buttressed by US- and Iraqi-sponsored investment and extensive job-creation programmes.
- *Doubling of PRTs*. The US would enhance the number and the outreach of its civilian presence through the expansion of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The American civilian personnel would double in number and would operate outside the green zone. For example, in Baghdad the number of PRTs was planned to grow from one to six and in the Anbar province from one to three.[63]

The plan was not well received. A considerable majority of public opinion (61%) opposed it and only 36 % supported it.[64] Expert opinion, whilst not uniformly critical, was not enthusiastic either. Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution was one of the rare supporters of the plan. He praised the renewed emphasis on reconstruction and job-creation efforts and he agreed that sending an additional 21,500 troops would help in implementing these ideas. But he also raised a number of caveats, arguing that it might be too late for the plan to work and that this Administration had proved incompetent in handling Iraq before.[65] Zbigniew Brzezinski (National Security Adviser under President Carter)

61. There was no mention of a timeframe for the increase in the number of troops in the President's announcement and at a press briefing Secretary of Defense Robert Gates admitted that 'no one has a really clear idea of how long that might be'; See 'Briefing on President's Strategy', *Washington Post*, 11 January 2007.

62. 'To Counter Iran's Role in Iraq, Bush Moves Beyond Diplomacy', *New York Times*, 11 January 2007.

63. 'Briefing on President's Strategy', *Washington Post*, 11 January 2007. 'Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review', National Security Council, January 2007.

64. 'Most Americans Opposed to Bush's Iraq Plan', *Washington Post*, 11 January 2007.

65. Kenneth M. Pollack, 'Last Chance in Iraq', The Brookings Institution, 11 January 2007.

was far more critical. Brzezinski argued that committing an additional 21,500 troops amounted to a 'political gimmick of no strategic benefit'. He also argued that the idea of imposing benchmarks on the Iraqi government would leave the Administration with two options: 'blame and run' when these benchmarks were not met (which, according to Brzezinski, was inevitable), or 'widen the conflict' by taking military action against Iran or Syria. Brzezinski suggested that the latter option was being pushed for by some necons.[66]

Congress also did not endorse Bush's idea. All leading Democrats expressed deep disappointment with the President's proposal, calling the increase of troops an 'escalation' rather than a 'surge' as referred to by Bush's team. Some Republicans were also critical and very few heavyweight GOP Congressmen came out in unreserved support of the plan. In February 2007 the House of Representatives passed a non-binding resolution opposing Bush's troop surge by a vote of 246-182, which marked the first time ever that Congress had defied Bush's Iraq policy.[67] However, the subsequent moves to force a change in Iraq were successfully stalled by the White House. In April 2007 the House and the Senate passed legislation ordering US troops to be withdrawn within a year. However, this bill was successfully vetoed by the President.[68] The subsequent attempts to tie Congress's approval of government's spending to the decision to withdraw from Iraq also failed, not least, because none of the heavyweight presidential candidates – including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – were prepared to support a motion that could be seen as unsupportive of the troops in Iraq.[69]

In the face of the Democrats' inability to impede or even modify Bush's plan, the 'surge' went ahead as planned. In fact, the change turned out to be even more substantial than the President had initially outlined, with the number of US troops going up by more than the 21,500 figure that he had spoken about at the end of 2006. Between January 2007 and November 2007 the number of US troops grew from 132,000 to 162,000, reaching a peak in September with 168,000 US troops in Iraq. As part of the new strategy, the US forces began arming the same Sunni tribes who had recently fought against them but who promised now to fight militants linked to al-Qaeda. At the same time the Coalition and Iraqi forces led a security operation in Baghdad (Enforcing the Law), which was managed by the Iraqi government. Clearly, this strategy was very risky not least because the ex-insurgents turned 'new

66. Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Five Flaws in the President's Plan', *Washington Post*, 12 January 2007.

67. 'House Rebukes Bush on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 25 January 2007.

68. 'Senate Passes Iraq Withdrawal Bill; Veto Threat Looms', CNN. International. Com, 26 April 2007, http://edition.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/04/26/congress.iraq/index.html

69. 'Iraq Funds Approved in Senate Budget Bill', *Washington Post*, 19 December 2007.

order supporters' could switch sides again and this time they would be armed with state-of-the-art American weapons.

Towards the end of 2007, to the surprise of many Democrats and to the delight of Iraq 'hawks', it became clear that the 'surge' had delivered improvements in several crucial areas. The number of civilian Iraqi casualties dropped from its most deadly level of 3,450 in November 2006 to 650 in November 2007 and 331 in August 2008. The number of US and coalition military personnel casualties have more than halved since summer 2007, as well as the number of attacks on the US and Iraqi forces. The overall level of violence in autumn 2008 was the lowest since the invasion.[70] The daily living conditions of the Iraqi population are also improving. Oil production is up to 2.4 million barrels per day – the highest level since the invasion and only marginally lower than the pre-invasion levels. Electricity production is now above the pre-war levels and the economy is picking up, expected to grow by not less than 7 percent in 2008 and 2009.[71] Iraqi refugees are returning in steady numbers – around 1,600 every day cross the border with Syria, although the flow is still far too slow to make up for the four million Iraqis who have left since the invasion.[72]

Finally, the reconciliation process is also picking up. In December 2007 the Sunni Arab Iraqi Accord Front called for the end to their boycott of the Iraqi Parliament and in January 2008 the Iraqi Parliament passed the law that allowed the Ba'ath party members to return to public life. The latter was one of the Congressional benchmarks for the success of the Iraqi government.

The reasons for these developments remain disputable. For example, according to some war critics, such as Ivo Daalder (who is a member of Barack Obama's campaign team), the improvements in Iraq have less to do with the change in the US military tactics and the 'surge' and more with the internal Iraqi situation. Certainly, one of the chief reasons for the waning of the insurgency is the shift in the policy of Sunni tribal leaders who decided to turn against al-Qaeda, creating an inhospitable environment for the terrorists. The second reason is the 'success' of the sectarian and ethnic cleansing – with Shiites being expelled from the Sunni areas and Sunnis from the Shiite areas.[73] However, whatever the reasons for the change in Iraq, there is no doubt that as we move towards the end of the Bush era the situation in Iraq no longer looks beyond hope. This, no doubt, has had an impact on the unfolding presidential campaign.

70. Iraq Coalition Casualties, http://icasualties.org/oif.

71. See: Jason H.Campbell and Michael E. O'Hanlon, 'The State of Iraq: An Update', *New York Times*, 22 December 2007. For economic data, see also 'IMF forecasts Iraq economic growth', *FT.com/World*, 17 January 2008.

72. 'Iraqi refugees "returning home"', *Al-Jazeera Net*, 22 November 2007. See: http://english.aljazeera.net/News/aspx/print.htm.

73. Ivo Daalder, 'Iraq After the Surge', 8 December 2007. See: http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/1208_iraq_daalder.aspx.

Iraq in the 2008 elections

On 28 January 2008 President Bush delivered his last State of the Union address. Faced with the downturn in the housing market following the subprime mortgage crisis, an unstable stock market and the prospect of recession, the American public's attention was increasingly shifting to the economy. In December 2007 36 percent of Americans judged Iraq to be their top concern against 16 percent who named the economy. By mid-January 2008 this trend had been reversed, with 29 percent of voters seeing the economy as the top issue in the 2008 elections, compared with the 20 percent who cited Iraq.[74] The President's address focused, however, more on Iraq than on any other issue, including the economy. This was unsurprising, especially as for the first time since the beginning of the war the news from Iraq has not been uniformly bleak and there have been some signs of improvement.

Citing the progress made in several crucial areas – especially the drop in the level of violence and reconciliation among Iraqi factions – Bush outlined some plans for the future. Most importantly, the President confirmed that he accepted the recommendation of the Commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq, General David H. Petraeus, to draw down the level of US force presence by July 2008 to the pre-surge level. By January 2008 the drawdown had already started, with some combat units (one Army Brigade Combat Unit and one Marine Expeditionary Unit) returning without replacement and an additional 20,000 troops being scheduled to return by July 2008. The units that remained would increasingly shift tasks from leading operations to partnering with Iraqi forces and progressively withdrawing from combat operations.

Bush warned against rushing into any further drawdown, which, according to the President, should be based on the recommendations of military commanders.[75] In other words, Bush urged his successor to stay the course that he has pursued. The US should not set a timetable for pulling out and it should maintain a sizeable military presence in Iraq for the foreseeable future.

At the end of Bush's presidency the situation in Iraq continued to improve. In autumn 2008 the Iraqi army took responsibility for the Anbar province, once the heartland of the Sunni insurgency. In September 2008 there were 146,000 US troops in Iraq, a figure which was still above the pre-surge level of 130,000. However, the Pentagon confirmed that by early 2009 the number of brigades would shrink

74. 'Economy, War To Dominate State of Union', *Washington Post*, 28 January 2008. 'Iraq, Economy, Healthcare, Immigration Top Vote Issues', Gallup Polls, 10 December 2007.

75. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080128-13.html.

from 15 to 14 with the purpose of shifting more troops to Afghanistan.[76] Following the negotiations with the Iraqi government on the Status of Forces Agreement, which have been ongoing since March 2008, it seems that the US may have to accept an 'aspirational' timetable of 2011, which has been suggested by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. At this point in time it is not clear yet if Iraq will demand a pullout of all US forces or only the combat troops.[77]

The timetable issue and the future of US Iraq policy is of course being debated in the 2008 presidential race. The success of the 'surge' has certainly helped John McCain to win the Republican nomination. In spring 2008 his campaign seemed to be collapsing, he was running behind his better financed rivals and the social conservatives were actively campaigning against him. But his consistent and at times unpopular message on Iraq appealed not only to the Republican base but especially to the independents. In the meantime, the popularity of the 'surge' shot up from only 22 percent supporting the policy at its outset in mid-2007 to 48 percent in July 2008.[78] A steady majority of Americans (78 percent in August 2008) trust that McCain would make a good Commander-in-Chief.[79]

Barack Obama opposed the invasion from the beginning although, as he was still a State senator in Illinois in 2002, he actually never had to vote on the issue. After joining the US Senate in 2004, Obama supported funding for US troops but he opposed the 2007 surge. Obama's ideas for the future of America's role in Iraq were consistent with the recommendations of the Baker/Hamilton Iraq Study Group Report. As recommended by the ISG, Obama called for the phased withdrawal of all combat brigades by 31 March 2008. With this goal having been rejected by the Administration, Obama now argues in favour of a phased withdrawal – one or two brigades a month – to be completed within 16 months. He would leave limited forces to combat terrorism but no troops would be involved in deterring Iran. US forces would be involved in training the Iraqi army only if there was a reconciliation among the different factions in Iraq. Obama has also explicitly ruled out the possibility of establishing permanent US bases in Iraq.[80]

Despite the improvements in Iraq, a clear majority of Americans consider the decision to invade Iraq a mistake, for which they blame George W.Bush, and the views on this issue have not been altered by the success of the 'surge'. Americans also overwhelmingly favour a setting of a pullout date for the troops withdrawal.[81] This indicates that, as far as the Iraq issue is important in the elections (which is less

76. 'Pentagon urges shift of troops from Iraq', *International Herald Tribune*, 5 September 2008.

77. 'Iran argues against Iraqi accord with U.S.', *The Wall Street Journal*, 5-7 September 2008.

78. See: http://www.gallup.com/video/109162/More-Americans-Say-Surge-Working.aspx.

79. See: http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/27/poll.security/index.html.

80. Barack Obama, 'Renewing American Leadership', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007.

81. See: http://www.gallup.com/poll/109165/Nearly-Half-US-Adults-Now-Applaud-Iraq-Surge.aspx.

than the economy), the voters are unlikely to be charmed by 'hawkish' rhetoric but they will favour the candidate who suggests the most plausible way of getting out of Iraq without incurring defeat.

Conclusion

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein did not lead to the spread of democracy around the region nor did it promote Arab-Israeli reconciliation. By no stretch of the imagination is Iraq likely in the foreseeable future to become as stable as West Germany and Japan became after the Second World War. The theocratic regime in Tehran has only been strengthened rather than weakened by the end of Saddam. In short, nothing has materialised from the neoconservative dream and, although this invasion was not pursued in the name of these goals, the neocon ideology's impact and credibility have probably been damaged for generations.

What the optimists hope for now is no longer victory or even a 'mission accomplished' scenario, but some kind of stability in Iraq. Few believe now that Iraq can become a true democracy in the near future, but it can continue to build a constitutional system and institutions for the rule of law. Real reconciliation is a distant prospect but a drop in sectarian violence is taking place. A thorough and comprehensive integration of the Sunnis into the political process in Iraq would certainly constitute a success. Finally, the emergence of a robust and united Iraqi security force capable of leading operations and taking on al-Qaeda would allow the Americans to reduce their military presence without worsening the security situation in Iraq. As the negotiations on the Status of Forces Agreement show, the Iraqis are now confident that soon they will be able to take the responsibility for the security of their own country. If this stand is realistic and not driven by political calculations, then this is already a sign of a considerable improvement.

The ideas put forward by John McCain and Barack Obama are of course important for the American debate and they may influence the outcome of the American elections. Crucially, it will also be under America's next president that the final configuration of Iraq and its constitutional order will be decided. America's role in this process may be important. However, as demonstrated in the last two years, progress in Iraq will depend first and foremost on the Iraqis themselves.

Iran

'States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world'.
George Bush, 29 January 2002.[82]

Introduction

Over four months after al-Qaeda's attack on the US, President Bush delivered his first ever State of the Union address, which became known as the 'axis of evil' speech. The President's address was the first indication that the US's response to 9/11 would not be limited to battling al-Qaeda and its associates. The US was about to embark on a course to change the *status quo* in the Middle East and possibly even in East Asia. The first and, as it turned out, the last victim of this revolutionary approach was Iraq. But the President also referred to Iran and North Korea, which hereby became known as the 'axis of evil' powers.

The three nations were bundled together for two apparent reasons – their alleged pursuit of WMD and their sponsorship of terrorism, although Bush's address also alluded to internal repression in these states. At the time the 'axis of evil' speech was delivered the US was already preparing for the invasion of Iraq. It remains unclear what plan of action was then considered with regard to Iran and North Korea, although some members of the Administration and even President Bush himself made some hawkish comments to the effect that Iran could expect to be next.[83]

In any case, if Bush's intention was to stop the pursuit of WMD by these two powers and to turn them into international pariahs, there is no doubt that he failed. Both North Korea and Iran have advanced their nuclear programmes since being cast as members of the 'axis of evil'. Pyongyang never once relaxed its stranglehold over its own people and Iran reverted to its repressive ways after the

82. 'State of the Union Address', 29 January 2002. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html.

83. See: David Hastings Dunn, '"Real Men Want to Go to Tehran": Bush, Pre-emption and the Iranian Nuclear Challenge', *International Affairs*, January 2007, p. 19.

election of its archconservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June 2005. After the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, ironically, the US removed two sworn enemies of Iran and by implication boosted Tehran's regional status.

In short, Iran represents a greater a challenge for the US in 2008 than it did in 2002 at the time of the axis of evil speech. Iran is now more conservative, more anti-American and more influential than ever. If Iran was really considered a serious threat to the US when Bush took up office, the eight years of Bush's Administration have done little to diminish that threat, quite the contrary in fact. The next president will face a resurgent Iran, which is no longer a bizarre pariah state but a power with regional ambitions.

This chapter addresses Bush's Iran policy by focusing on the most pertinent issues in the relationship in the last eight years. These were Afghanistan, Iraq and the nuclear issue. The chapter also looks at the future prospects for the relationship in the light of the 2008 presidential elections.

The prelude: the Clinton period

One of the guiding principles of Bush's foreign policy has been known as the ABC – 'Anything But Clinton' – implying a clear determination to make a break with his predecessor's policies. Bush's new foreign policy was meant to be more muscular, more unilateral and less engaged. What did it mean regarding US's relations with Iran?

There was little room for a substantively more assertive policy *vis-à-vis* Iran, not least because, by the end of his presidency, it was already becoming clear that Clinton's overtures *vis-à-vis* the reformist government of Mohammand Khatami remained fruitless and the former president toughened up his position before departing from office.

Following the 1997 elections in Iran, which delivered a landslide victory for the reformist camp led by President Khatami, Clinton's administration had looked for a way to break the impasse with Tehran. Several gestures were made by Washington including the lifting of sanctions on foodstuffs and carpets, which after petroleum were the second biggest category of Iranian exports to the US. In April 2000 the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright broke the decades of silence about the CIA's

role in engineering the *coup* that returned the Shah to power in Tehran by publicly admitting that: 'the *coup* was clearly a setback for Iran's political development, and it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs'.[84]

However, beyond some friendly rhetoric and President Khatami's call for a 'dialogue of civilisations' the change in Iran's policy towards the US, whilst real, did not constitute a breakthrough. Shortly after becoming president, Khatami managed to impose a degree of control over the Iranian security apparatus which had some beneficial impact for the US. Most importantly, the reformist Interior Minister Abdullah Nuri purged the Ministry of officials suspected of supporting terrorist activities and in 1998 the smuggling of Iraqi oil through Iranian waters was stopped.[85] However, after the summer 1999 student riots in which Khatami failed to support the protesters, the conservatives regained the upper hand in Iran and the tenuous *rapprochement* with the US died before it was properly born. Whilst Clinton's overtures were welcomed by the reformers, the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamene'i rejected them and it was his position that mattered.[86] The three issues that the US emphasised as problem areas in relations with Iran – terrorism, opposition to the Middle East peace process and non-proliferation – have not improved in Washington's view. Hence, toward the end of Clinton's presidency US-Iran relations were on a collision course once again.[87]

Bush's Iran policy

The two factors that have had a major influence on Bush's policy towards Tehran have been the 'war on terror' and the divisions within the Administration. As was the case during Clinton's presidency, Iran never really made it to the forefront of Washington's attention. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have consumed the lion's share of the President's attention and the Iran policy has by necessity been addressed in these contexts. In addition, policy on Iran has been a classic case of an issue marked by divisions in the Administration, which prevented the emergence of a coherent position. On the one hand the Administration's 'hawks' – clustered especially in the office of the Secretary of Defense and the office of Vice-President Cheney – were pushing for 'regime change' in Tehran. On the other hand, the State Department 'doves' were

84. For the transcript of Albright's admission see: http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0004/19/i_ins.00.html.

85. 'Iran Says It Seized Ship Smuggling Iraqi Oil', *New York Times*, 6 April 2000.

86. 'Khamenei Rejects US Overtures', *BBC News*: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/690551.stm.

87. Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2005).

looking for engagement and *rapprochement*. Further complicating this was the 'hawks" obsession with Iraq, which meant that whilst effectively obstructing the 'doves', they were unable to develop an alternative view of Iran policy because their attention was elsewhere.

However, whilst suffering from insufficient attention, Bush's Iran policy was not destined to be more conflictual than during the Clinton era. In fact, at the outset of Bush's presidency, it seemed that there were some opportunities for improving US-Iranian relations. The Bush Administration was staffed with many individuals with interests in oil companies, which generally favoured lifting the sanctions against Iran. For example, in 1996 the then chairman of Halliburton, Dick Cheney, called the Iran sanctions 'self-defeating' and criticised the use of economic instruments for political purposes.[88] Iran's response to 9/11 was amongst the most sympathetic amongst Muslim countries. There were spontaneous candlelight vigils in Tehran and the government strongly condemned the attacks.[89] In fact, Iran was soon to become an ally in the war on terror.

Afghanistan

The convergence of the US and Iranian interest in Afghanistan became apparent in the wake of 9/11. In fact, Washington and Tehran had an opportunity to consult each other's views on Afghanistan in the framework of 'six-plus-two' talks (composed of Afghanistan's six neighbours plus Russia and the US) since 1999. Within this group the Iranians were amongst the strongest supporters of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance and they warned the US about al-Qaeda's activities in Afghanistan. However, at this point (the late 1990s), the US was reluctant to get involved in the region or to take on any substantial commitments. This, naturally, changed in the wake of 9/11. The other six plus two powers were either reluctant to endorse or were categorically opposed to the US strike against the Taliban, but not Iran which considered the Taliban a lethal enemy and was keen to see the back of it.[90]

The US and Iran therefore agreed to cooperate and discuss the Afghani operation away from the six-plus-two format in a subgroup created under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva. The group became known as the 'Geneva Contact Group' and apart from the US and Iran it included also Italy and Germany.

88. 'Dick Cheney, Iran and Halliburton: A Report by the Office of Senator Franck R. Lautenberg'. Available at: http://lautenberg.senate.gov/documents/foreign/REPORT_Halliburton_Iran.pdf.

89. 'Iran condemns attacks on US', *BBC News*, 17 September 2001; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1549573.stm

90. Daniel Brumberg, 'End of a Brief Affair? The United States and Iran', *Policy Brief*, Carnegie Endowment, 14 March 2002.

However, Italy and Germany rarely attended the sessions so the Contact Group effectively became a vehicle for the US-Iranian dialogue about Afghanistan. In the course of the discussions the Iranians made some very valuable offers of help, including making Iranian airfields available to stage American transport aircraft to assist operations in western Afghanistan and allowing the passage of American humanitarian supplies through its port of Chah Bahar.[91]

In its official declarations Tehran remained critical of the US presence in its region and the Supreme Leader Khamene'i actually publicly condemned the Operation *Enduring Freedom*.[92] However, in reality the Iranians were very helpful in making sure that the US operation would succeed. In fact, the Iranians even urged the Americans not to suspend the military operation during the holy month of Ramadan, promising help in case this would damage the image of the US in the Islamic world. The Iranians also played a pivotal role during the post-war conference on rebuilding Afghanistan in Bonn in the end of November 2001 with the groundwork for the success of the conference being earlier prepared in the context of the Geneva Group.[93] The US and Iranians worked out a plan for drawing the Pashtuns into the political process and the Iranians were instrumental in bringing in the former king Zahir Shah, henceforth adding credibility to the process.

The cooperation over Afghanistan was so good that the Geneva Group moved to discuss other regional issues, especially Iraq. This signified a considerable upgrade in the level of the US-Iranian dialogue. During the Clinton era the US was bending backwards and forwards to have bilateral face-to-face meetings with the Iranian officials. Yet, this was never granted by Tehran. Now such talks were in full swing and Washington did not even seem to realise this.

This good atmosphere was soon spoiled by moves on both sides. In January 2002, the Israelis intercepted a ship, *Karine A*, that was loaded with illegal arms and explosives made in Iran and ordered by the Palestinian Authority. This order was in violation of every agreement signed by the Palestinian Authority with Israel.[94] Then, it was discovered that a number of al-Qaeda leaders that had escaped from Afghanistan to Iran were allowed considerable freedom of action by Tehran. Evidence also emerged that Iran was making considerable progress on the nuclear programme. Three weeks after the discovery of the *Karine A* incident, George W.

91. Pollack, op. cit. in note 65, p. 346.

92. 'A Nation Challenged: Tehran; Iran Cleric Condemns Airstrikes', *New York Times*, 9 October 2001.

93. Brumberg, op.cit. in note 90.

94. Robert Satloff '*Karine-A*: The Strategic Implications of Iranian-Palestinian Collusion', *Policy Watch*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 15 January 2002.

Bush gave his State of the Union address that contained the famous 'axis of evil' phrase in which Iran was lumped together with Iraq and North Korea.

The 'axis of evil' speech came as an unpleasant surprise to the Iranians not only because of the level of cooperation they had shown since 9/11. Unlike the North Koreans and Iraqis, Iran had some kind of a democratic movement and its regime was decidedly less oppressive. As the election of Khatami demonstrated, a change in Iran was possible, albeit within restricted limits. Since the axis of evil speech was not well received by the general public in Iran, some have argued that it actually strengthened the conservatives who, of course, reacted by firing back insults at the US. The Iranians also stopped attending the Geneva Group meetings and they freed Gulbuddin Hekmatyar – a fanatically anti-American Afghani warlord and a Sunni fundamentalist.

Iraq: invasion and reconstruction

Despite the deterioration of the relationship caused by both Iranian actions and Bush's 'axis of evil' speech, the US and Iran had a common interest in Iraq and initially found ground for pragmatic cooperation. Iranians returned to the Geneva Group in March 2002 and a reconstructed US delegation was headed now by Zalmay Khalilzad, a heavyweight who had been then the National Security Council (NSC) senior figure dealing with Iraq and subsequently served as the US ambassador in Afghanistan, Iraq and recently to the UN. The Iranians came away from the talks with the assurance that the US would not leave Iraq until it got rid of Saddam Hussein and that post-war Iraq would have a pluralistic political system in which the country's Shia majority would become the dominant group. This, of course, suited Iran well.

To be sure, not all Iraq's Shia were necessarily pro-Iranian and it would be inaccurate to see Iraq's Shia as Iran's proxies.[95] However, there is no doubt that Iran remained a very powerful player in Iraq's domestic context. For example, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the largest member of the governing Shia coalition, is led by Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, who recognises the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamene'i, as the spiritual leader of all Shia, including those of Iraq.[96] The SCIRI's militia, the Badr organization, was trained and armed by Iran. There can be no doubt but that Iran had the capacity to make the

95. Walter Posch, 'A majority ignored: the Arabs in Iraq' in Walter Posch (ed.), 'Looking into Iraq', *Chaillot Paper* no. 79, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris, July 2005, pp. 25-41.

96. Andrzej Kapiszewski, 'The Iraqi Elections and their Consequences' in ibid., pp. 13-21.

US job in Iraq extremely difficult. What happened in reality fell somewhere in between.

During the Operation *Iraqi Freedom* in March-April 2003 Iran stayed neutral. It did not help the US as it had done in Afghanistan but neither was it a nuisance. After the operation ended, Iran became the first country to recognise the US-backed Iraqi Governing Council and used its influence on various Shia groups such as SCIRI and ad-Dawa to participate in the US-led political process in Iraq.[97] This, of course, did not derive from altruism or a change of heart about the US on Iran's part but from a clear calculation and self-interest. Fearing the influx of Iraqi refugees and the consequences of the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq for its own Kurdish population as well as other minorities in Iran, Tehran was clearly interested in preventing Iraq from sliding into civil war and chaos.[98] The continuing Sunni insurgency and the rise of al-Qaeda across the border could hardly be seen as in Iran's interest. By contrast, a stable Iraq ruled by Iran-friendly Shia groups was a net gain from Tehran's perspective.

However, whilst the US and Iran interests in Iraq were for the most part reconcilable if not congruent, in reality any formal co-operation between the two ceased in 2003. Following the discovery of the Iranian nuclear programme in August 2002 and then a flurry of mutual terror accusations (the Iranians being accused of harbouring al-Qaeda operatives and the US of failing to disarm Iraq-based Mujahedin-e-Khalg) the Geneva Group talks broke off in May 2003.[99] In the meantime Iran begun arming its friendly Shia groups and developing its own intelligence network as well as acting via its various proxy groups; such as Hizbollah and Lebanese Hizbollah, to strengthen its presence in Iraq.

With the situation in Iraq worsening dramatically, especially in the wake of the Samarra Mosque bombing on 22 February 2006, both the US and Iran started to explore ways to return to bilateral talks. In March 2006 the leader of the pro-Iran SCIRI party, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, called on the US and Iran to return to negotiations. Iran responded positively and the US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad disclosed that back-channel discussions were underway with Iran on resuming direct talks about Iraq.[100] Whilst initially little happened, the idea of having a limited dialogue with Iran – as was the case with regard to Afghanistan – was beginning to gather momentum in the US. For example, a return to bilateral talks was explicitly put forward as one of the key notions in the

97. Iraq Report, *Global Security*, 20 November 2003. See: http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2003/11/48-201103.htm.

98. Martin van Bruinessen, 'Kurdish Challenges' in Walter Posch (ed.) *Looking into Iraq*, op. cit. in note 95, pp.59-60.

99. 'Mutual Terror Accusations Halt US-Iran Talks', *USA Today*, 21 May 2003.

100. 'U.S, Iran Closer to talks on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 18 March 2006.

Baker/Hamilton Iraq Study Group Report, published in December 2006.[101]

Bush initially resisted these calls and there was no mention of talks with Iran in his own Iraq plan that followed the ISG recommendations, but this position has changed over time. Acting at the instigation of Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, on 28 May 2007, the US Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan C. Crocker, and Iran's ambassador to Baghdad, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, met to discuss Iraq, marking the first such occasion since 2003. The talks were hosted by the government of Iraq and they were attended by Iraq's national security advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie. As expected, the two sides agreed on what kind of Iraq they would like to see – as argued by Ambassador Crocker 'a stable, democratic, federal Iraq, in control of its own security, at peace with its neighbours'. However, they also wasted no time accusing each other of meddling in Iraqi affairs. The US accused Iran of supplying arms to the insurgents and Shia militias, which are then used against the US and Iraqi security forces. Iran restated its view that the US is an imperial power that brought instability to the Middle East and that it needed to announce a timetable for its withdrawal from Iraq.[102]

These talks were happening against the background of escalating US-Iran tensions caused by the US decision to detain five Iranians accused of supplying weapons to Iraqi insurgents and Iran's response of putting four American-Iranians under house arrest. The detained Iranians were acting as liaison officers in the northern Kurdish town of Irbil. The US arrest was criticised by the Kurdish Parliament and the Iraqi foreign minister Hoshyar Zebari called for their immediate release.[103] The issue resurfaced again during the second round of talks in July 2007 and is considered as one of the reasons why so little progress has been achieved in negotiations. In fact, after the third round of talks at the expert level, the fourth round scheduled for February and then early March 2008 was delayed by Tehran.[104] As of September 2008 these talks have still not happened, although the Iraqis have been pressing both sides to restart the negotiations.[105]

In March 2008 Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became the first leader from outside the US-led coalition to visit post-war Iraq. As expected, Ahmadinejad criticised the US in harsh and condescending terms and he reiterated his call for the end of the US occupation of Iraq. However, the fact that he was doing so from the inside of the US-protected Green Zone, which became a

101. James A. Naker and Lee H. Hamilton (co-chairs), *The Iraq Study Group Report; The Way Forward – A New Approach* (Vintage Books: New York, 2006).

102. 'US, Iran Open Dialogue on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 29 May 2007.

103. 'Saddam Hussein's Co-Defendants Hanged', *Washington Post*, 15 January 2007.

104. 'US-Iran "talks" in Iraq Postponed', *AlJazzera.net*, 6 March 2008.

105. http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8706191155.

symbol of the US occupation, was not lost on the locals. Many Iraqis, including those in the Shia- dominated South, have apparently been of the view that the mutual accusations between Iran and the US are in fact a cover for their cooperation.[106] Whether there is some truth or not in this sceptical view of the US-Iran conflict over Iraq, there is no doubt as to the single issue that overshadows almost everything in this relationship: Iran's nuclear ambition and America's vehement opposition to it.

The nuclear issue

In the midst of the controversy surrounding America's run-up to the war in Iraq, in August 2002, the Iranian opposition group – the National Council of Resistance (NCR) – a political arm of The People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) – announced that its sources confirmed the existence of Iran's hidden nuclear facilities in Natanz and Arak. The NCR claimed that Iran had a clandestine gas centrifuge at Natanz to enrich uranium and a heavy-water production facility at Arak to extract plutonium. In December 2002 US intelligence sources confirmed the existence of these two sites and two months later, in February 2003, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspected the Natanz facility. The IAEA inspection not only confirmed the revelations disclosed by the NCR but it also found 160 centrifuges that were probably supplied with the help of A.Q. Khan's Pakistani network. Confronted with these facts, Iran admitted the existence of its nuclear programme but it maintained that its purpose was purely civilian.

The existence of the uranium enrichment facility and of the heavy-water plant was not in itself against the IAEA rules or a sufficient proof of a nuclear weapons programme in Iran. But according to the NPT rules, Iran was obliged to notify the IAEA of the existence of its nuclear facilities and the import of centrifuges without notifying the IAEA was in clear violation of the NPT Safeguard Agreement. More importantly, the fact that Iran had developed these facilities in secret when it did not have to suggests that it intended to use them for military purposes. Being one of the world's top oil producers sitting on the world's first or second-biggest (depending on the estimate) gas reserves, Iran did not produce a convincing argument as to why it needed a civilian nuclear programme.[107]

106. Ahmad Janabi, 'Iran's Man in Iraq', *AlJazeera.net*, 5 March 2008.

107. On Iran's nuclear policy see: Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 'The Future of Iran's Defence and Nuclear Policy', in Walter Posch (ed.), 'Iranian Challenges', op. cit. in note 95, pp. 73-82.

What subsequently followed has been a diplomatic roller-coaster (as documented in the chart below) which included various incentives (such as the EU offer of economic cooperation and US offer to join the negotiations) and threats (UN sanctions, the US's veiled threat to use force). But none of these methods succeeded and Iran has pushed ahead with it nuclear programme. In April 2006 President Ahmadinejad was able to announce that Iran had successfully enriched uranium.

The Timeline of the Iranian nuclear controversy[108]

2002
August 2002: An Iranian exile opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, accuses Tehran of hiding a uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz and heavy-water plant at Arak. **September 2002**: Russian technicians begin construction of Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr despite strong objections from the US.
2003
February-May 2003: The IAEA conducts a series of inspections in Iran. The country confirms that there are sites at Natanz and Arak under construction, but insists that these, like Bushehr, are designed solely to provide fuel for future power plants. **June 2003**: The White House refuses to rule out the 'military option' in dealing with Iran after the IAEA says Iran 'failed to report certain nuclear materials and activities'. The IAEA does not declare Iran in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but requests that Iran signs the Additional Protocol to the NPT and allows unannounced inspections of its nuclear sites. **July 2003**: The IAEA begins a fresh round of inspections in Iran. **September 2003**: Washington agrees to support proposal from Britain, France and Germany to give Iran until the end of October to fully disclose nuclear activities and allow for a stricter inspection regime.

108. The author would like to thank EUISS intern Stine Rasmussen for preparing this timeline.

October-November 2003: The foreign ministers of France, Germany, and Great Britain travel to Tehran and persuade Iran to agree to suspend its uranium enrichment programme and allow tougher UN inspections of its nuclear facilities.

An IAEA report says Iran has admitted producing plutonium but adds there is no evidence that it was trying to build an atomic bomb. However, the United States, seeking to have the matter referred to the UN Security Council, dismisses the report as 'impossible to believe'. The IAEA passes a resolution sternly rebuking Iran for covering up 18 years of atomic experiments, but does not refer the matter to the Security Council.

2004

March 2004: A UN resolution condemns Iran for keeping some of its nuclear activities secret. Iran reacts by banning inspectors from its sites for several weeks.

May 2004: Iran submits a 1,000-page report on its nuclear activities to the IAEA .

July 2004: Iran says it has resumed production of parts for centrifuges that are used for enriching uranium, but insists that it has not resumed its enrichment activities. The announcement appears to put the enrichment-freeze deal worked out between Iran, the EU-3, and the IAEA in jeopardy.

September 2004: The IAEA passes a resolution giving a November deadline for Iran to suspend uranium enrichment. Iran rejects the call and begins converting raw uranium into gas.

October 2004: The EU-3 again calls for Iran to suspend all uranium-enrichment activities to avoid its case being brought before the Security Council. The Europeans offer economic and political incentives in exchange. The Iranian parliament passes a bill approving the resumption of enrichment activities.

November 2004: Iran agrees to the European offer to suspend uranium-enrichment in exchange for trade concessions. At the last minute, Tehran backs down from its demand to exclude some centrifuges from the freeze. The US says it maintains its right to refer Iran unilaterally to the UN Security Council if Tehran fails to fulfil its commitment.

2005

January 2005: Europe and Iran begin trade talks. The EU-3 demand Iran stop its uranium enrichment programme permanently.

February 2005: Iranian President Mohammed Khatami says his country will never give up nuclear technology, but stresses it is for peaceful purposes. Russia backs Tehran, and signs a deal to supply fuel to Iran's Bushehr reactor.

March 2005: The US signals a major change in policy towards Iran. It announces that it will back the negotiation track led by the EU-3 and offer economic incentives as well as lift a decade-long block on Iran's membership of the World Trade Organization, and objections to Tehran obtaining parts for commercial planes in exchange for Iran giving up its nuclear ambitions.

April 2005: Supreme National Security Council Secretary Hojatoleslam Hassan Rohani says that Tehran is considering resumption of activities at the Isfahan uranium conversion facility (UCF).

June 2005: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Tehran's ultra-conservative mayor, wins a run-off vote in the presidential elections, defeating cleric and former president Hashemi Rafsanjani.

July 2005: The outgoing President Khatami says that Iran will not forsake the right to produce nuclear fuel and the enrichment suspension will not be permanent.

August 2005: President George W. Bush makes the first of several statements in which he refuses to rule out using force against Iran.

Iran rejects the EU proposal, which includes commercial and political cooperation in exchange for Iran's forsaking efforts to develop nuclear fuel.

August-September 2005: Tehran says it has resumed uranium conversion at its Isfahan plant and insists the programme is for peaceful purposes. The IAEA finds Iran in violation of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

2006

February 2006: IAEA governing board votes overwhelmingly to report Iran to the UN Security Council over its nuclear activities.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki announces the end of Iran's voluntary co-operation with the IAEA. Later this month Iran confirms that it has resumed work on uranium enrichment.

March 2006: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says the US faces 'no greater challenge' than Iran's nuclear programme.

April 2006: Iran announces it has successfully enriched uranium - prompting Ms. Rice to demand 'strong steps' by the UN. An IAEA report concludes Iran has not complied with a Security Council demand that it suspend uranium enrichment. Mr. Ahmadinejad insists the pursuit of peaceful nuclear technology is Iran's 'absolute right'.

May 2006: The US, Britain and France table a draft resolution at the United Nations Security Council calling on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment or face 'further action'. In response, Iran's parliament threatens to pull out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty if pressure over its nuclear programme increases.

Later that month, the US offers to join EU nations in direct talks with Iran if it agrees to suspend uranium enrichment and reprocessing work.

July 2006: The UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1696, calling for Iran to suspend uranium-enrichment activities or face the possibility of economic sanctions.

October 2006: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice suggests the international community will have no choice but to impose sanctions on Iran if it refuses to suspend its uranium-enrichment efforts.

December 2006: The UN Security Council unanimously passes a resolution imposing sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme.

2007

March 2007: The Security Council unanimously approves further financial and weapons sanctions against Iran.

August 2007: The IAEA and Iran agree a timeline for answering outstanding questions about Iran's nuclear programme.

October 2007: Ali Larijani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, resigns and is replaced by Saeed Jalili.

November 2007: IAEA report clears Iran of nine outstanding issues but it warns that its knowledge of Tehran's present atomic work was shrinking due to Iran's refusal to implement the Additional Protocol.

December 2007: The US National Intelligence Estimate (which represents the consensus view of 16 American spy agencies) concluded with 'high confidence' that Iran stopped its nuclear weapon programme in 2003 and with 'moderate' confidence that the programme remains frozen and with 'moderate-to-high' confidence that Iran is 'keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons'.

2008

February 2008: The IAEA publishes a report on Iran's implementation of safeguards. The IAEA director Mohammad El Baradai states that all outstanding issues, including the scope and nature of Iran's enrichment programme, have been clarified with a single exception, 'the alleged weaponisation studies that supposedly Iran has conducted in the past'.

19 July 2008: William Burns, US Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, joins international talks (5P+1) with Iran with the purpose of persuading Tehran to freeze enriching uranium in exchange for a package of incentives.

6 August 2008: Iran's response to the package offered by 5P+1 contains no commitment to freezing uranium enrichment.

Over the years during the Bush presidency Iran made substantial progress in its nuclear programme; most importantly, it produced low-grade enriched uranium and it begun making nuclear fuel in an underground uranium enrichment plant. Both these developments move Iran closer towards becoming a threshold nation, capable of producing a nuclear weapon within a relatively short period of time. In the meantime Iran withdrew from the Paris 2004 agreement with the EU according to which it voluntarily complied with the Additional Protocol and it refrained from enriching uranium. This development, combined with the fact that Iran has successfully divided the international community, including the IAEA, means that whatever leverage the US had over Iran has been substantially reduced. The only bit of good news for the US is the findings of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), published in December 2007, which claims that Iran halted its nuclear weapon programme in 2003. But the NIE conclusion has been questioned by many, including President Bush himself, who argued that Iran remained a danger.[109] According to Israeli sources, Iran will be ready to produce a nuclear bomb by 2010.

Why has the US failed so badly on this issue? There are three main reasons. Firstly, there were many factors beyond the Administration's capacity to influence the Iranian domestic context. During Khatami's presidency Iran spoke with two voices on foreign policy but in reality it was only the voice of the Supreme Leader Khamene'i that counted. Under Ahmadinejad's presidency Iran's nuclear policy became even less compromising and the issue developed into the new president's signature project where he chose to demonstrate his conservative and nationalistic credentials.[110] Arguably, this development could not be decisively influenced by Washington and as Iran and other countries (North Korea but also India and Pakistan) choose to become nuclear powers there is little that the outside world can do short of launching a war.

Secondly, Bush's Administration chose to ignore Iran and leave the diplomatic route to the Europeans. This strategy was obviously devised as a kind of punishment for Iran and there was perhaps an expectation in Washington that Tehran would go out of its way to bring the US to the negotiating table. When Bush's Administration saw that this was not working and it announced its intention of joining the negotiations under the condition that Iran stop the enrichment process, it was too late and the Iranians

109. 'Bush Says Iran Still a Danger Despite Report on Weapons', *New York Times*, 7 December 2007.

110. William O. Beeman, 'After Ahmadinejad: the prospects for US-Iranian Relations,' in Walter Posch (ed.), 'Iranian Challenges', op. cit. in note 95, pp. 87-96.

ignored this call entirely. In July 2008 William Burns, the third-ranking US diplomat, joined negotiations with Iran even though Tehran had not stopped the enrichment process. The Americans even floated the idea of normalising diplomatic relations with Iran: however, at this point the Iranians dug their heels in too deeply and Bush's 'U turn' seemed to produce no result. Thirdly, there is no doubt that the war in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq served as major distractions for the Administration and little energy was left to deal with other outstanding issues. Against this background, Washington's attempt to isolate Tehran may be also seen as the way of not dealing with the problem because its own hands were already full.

'Bomb, bomb Iran'

The Bush Administration's 'hands off' approach *vis-à-vis* Tehran has occasionally been punctuated by rumours of a planned military strike. In some instances the Administration consciously gave some credibility to these speculations, for example, by articulating an explicit threat against Iran and Syria if they continued to sponsor terrorism in its March 2006 Security Strategy.[111] The Strategy was followed by the publication of an alleged plan of American attack on Iran in *The New Yorker* on 8 April 2006.[112] The article, by Seymour M. Hersh, argued that the Pentagon had presented the White House with an option to use bunker-buster nuclear bombs against Iran's underground nuclear sites. The White House denied these claims and President Bush repeatedly stressed that the US would continue to pursue a diplomatic solution to the Iranian crisis, yet still there has been a lingering suspicion around the world and in the US that the US was moving down the same route as it did with Iraq.[113]

The rumours of possible military action picked up in mid-2006 and have faded into the background since, especially since the Congressional elections in November 2006. Still, however, a military option is certainly seriously considered in some quarters of the administration. There are three basic ways of attacking Iran: an all-out invasion, attacking Iran's military and nuclear infrastructure or just bombing selected nuclear facilities. In all probability the first one of these approaches has been ruled out as unrealistic, not least because of the experience of Iraq. Iran's population is nearly three times greater than Iraq's, its mountain-

111. 'The National Security Strategy 2006'. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/.

112. Seymour M.Hersh, 'The Iran Plans: How far will the White House go?', *The New Yorker*, 17 April 2006.

113. See the article by former National Security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Do not attack Iran', *International Herald Tribune*, 26 April 2006.

ous terrain is ideal for waging effective guerrilla warfare and Iran's population is deeply nationalistic. In other words, undertaking a war in Iran would be much more difficult than in Iraq.

The remaining two options for conducting a military strike against Iran are, however, seen as far more plausible. An example that is often quoted in this context is the Israeli raid on the Osirak installations in Iraq in 1981 that derailed Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapon programme for years. If the US could repeat the same success in Iran, this would have the benefit of at least postponing the development of Iran's nuclear weapon. However, critics point out many drawbacks of this plan. The Israeli Osirak strike had the benefit of surprise, the same would not be true with Iranians who are aware of the possibility of an American strike and have no doubt taken precautions. The Iranians could also retaliate with terrorist attacks and, more importantly, they could retaliate against the US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, a US strike would have domestic implications in Iran where, no doubt, the reform movement would be severely damaged.[114]

It is impossible to predict whether President Bush will attack Iran before he steps down in December 2008. However, it is probably less likely now (in 2008) than it was in mid-2006, when the possibility of a military strike against Iran was widely discussed in Washington. President Bush seems to be focused on leaving behind an improved situation in Iraq and Afghanistan and attacking Iran would be counter-productive in achieving these goals. In addition, the publication of the NIE report, in December 2007, whilst contested by Bush, removed the sense of urgency in dealing with Iran's nuclear programme. It is likely, therefore, that answering this question will be left to the new president.

Iran in the 2008 elections

Along with Iraq, Iran represents another key foreign policy issue that divides the candidates. There are, however, also some major points of consensus between both parties. Most importantly, both Democrats and the Republicans insist that the military option must remain on the table and be seriously considered in case Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons became imminent. Both camps are united in calling for tougher sanctions as long as Iran does not suspend its work on enriching uranium. In the event that no con-

114. Pollack, op. cit.in note 65, pp. 392-93.

sensus on sanctions can be established at the United Nations, Barack Obama and John McCain have both called on the 'like-minded nations' to join them in creating a sanctions regime outside the UN framework.

For example, Barack Obama has called on Europeans to end large-scale credit guarantees and he proposed the legislation that would require of the US government to publish the list of companies that invest more than $20 in Iran's energy sector.[115] John McCain would ask the allies to impose restrictions on the Iranian export of refined gasoline. McCain has also proposed that the US with its allies support a disinvestment campaign to isolate Tehran.[116]

Still, however, there are some unbridgeable differences between both parties, and especially between McCain and Obama. McCain has essentially argued in favour of maintaining the approach pursued in the eight years of Bush's presidency, perhaps even with some more hawkish undertones. Like Bush, McCain promises to extend his Administration's counterterrorism efforts beyond combating the stateless groups like al-Qaeda and expand it to the state sponsors of terrorism, where Iran clearly tops McCain's list.[117] The likelihood of McCain taking a military action against Iran is generally considered greater than would be the case with a Democratic President and it was underlined by his claims that one thing worse than a war against Iran would be a 'nuclear armed Iran' and his notorious singing of the refrain 'bomb, bomb Iran' to the tune of the Beachboys on the campaign trail.[118] McCain's camp also tends to see Iran's hand in all major incidents in Iraq, like the Basra riots in March and April 2008, hence implicitly suggesting that a solution to Iraq is regime change in Iran.

Barack Obama also does not have kind words for Iran, which he famously called 'a threat to all of us' whilst speaking to the gathering of the pro-Likud American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPEC) in March 2008.[119] But unlike McCain, Obama stresses the diplomatic route in dealing with Tehran. Obama promises to engage in 'aggressive personal diplomacy' with Iran with no preconditions attached – a policy proposal which constitutes a sharp break with the practice of the Bush years. Until 2006 Bush refused to talk to Iran altogether and in March 2006 Condoleeza Rice offered to join the EU-Iran negotiations but only on the condition that Iran suspend enriching uranium. In July 2008 the US

115. Julianne Smith, 'Transatlantic relations under an Obama Administration', *Opinion EUISS*, 20 March 2008. See:http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Obama_Transatlantic_Relations.pdf.

116. John McCain, 'An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom', *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007.

117. Ibid; 'Remarks by John McCain to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council', 26 March 2008;. See:http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/News/Speeches/872473dd-9ccb-4ab4-9d0d-ec54f0e7a497.htm.

118. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-zoPgv_; 'McCain Outlines Foreign Policy', *Washington Post,* 27 March 2008.

119. 'Obama: Iran Threatens all of us', *Chicago Sun Times*, 3 March 2008.

dropped this condition and sent William Burns to join the negotiations between Iran and 5 permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany; however, the Administration went out of its way to argue that this was an exception. Obama is not only saying that he would negotiate with Iran with no preconditions but that he would also present Iran with economic inducements (including US support for Iran's WTO membership) and security guarantees. Obama has also offered a possible promise not to seek 'regime change' if Iran stops meddling in Iraq, and cooperates on terrorism and nuclear questions.[120]

The candidates' positions on Iran reflect a classical hawk/dove split between the GOP and Democrats. There is no doubt but that if elected John McCain would be most likely to pursue a more belligerent policy towards Iran than his Democrat rival. Many, however, question whether he would really rush to undertake a military strike. As argued by his advisors, the military option would not be pursued in other than a last-resort scenario and for the time being McCain would prefer to use economic instruments acting in cooperation with the EU. As for the Democrats, it is difficult to believe that they would keep the military option on the table for other than diplomatic and political purposes. However, if Israel's security were to come under a clear threat from Iran, the future President, be it John McCain or Barack Obama, would be likely to take military action.

Conclusion: what is Bush's Iran legacy?

What state of play regarding US-Iran relations will the next incumbent at the White House inherit from George Bush? Bush's Iran policy was marked by three essential factors: continuity, neglect and the change in Iran's strategic environment.

As far as direct relations with Iran are concerned, Bush will actually leave behind little that is new at all. When he came to power, after years of Clinton's unsuccessful overtures that failed to produce a meaningful change, he inherited worsening relations with Tehran. At that point in time the foreign policy establishment, both left and right, was, to put it crudely, fed up with Iran. Unlike Clinton, Bush did not even try to reach out to Tehran but neither was he unpragmatic or overtly ideological. In some respects he was also more successful than Clinton. After all, it was

120. 'Obama Envisions New Iran Approach', *New York Times*, 2 November 2007.

under Bush, not Clinton, that the US and Iran had bilateral face-to-face negotiations on Afghanistan and Iraq but also on a broader scope of issues in the framework of the Geneva group. It is true that Bush reacted to the discovery of Iran's nuclear programme by seeking its isolation and effectively ending the emerging bilateral cooperation; however, it is highly probable that any American president would have done exactly the same in such circumstances.

Bush's inclusion of Iran in his infamous 'axis of evil' speech and his hinting at the possibility of taking on Iran militarily after Iraq were perhaps an indication that the President was indeed planning a major policy shift and was adopting a clearly aggressive posture *vis-à-vis* Tehran. But the failure in Iraq meant that these plans, if indeed ever nearing the realm of possibility, were never pursued. The result has been a confused policy of confrontational rhetoric, belligerent posturing and occasional cooperation. In short a continuity of the policy that the US has pursued since 1979 – there has been no distinctively Bush element to it.

The second hallmark of Bush's Iran approach is neglect. The administration has never really got down to working out a comprehensive Iran policy, which instead has remained largely reactive and driven by the developments in America's Iraq and Afghanistan policy. This lack of focus was aggravated by the splits in the Bush Administration, with the State Department traditionally advocating engagement and a pursuit of the diplomatic route and the hawks in the Vice-President's office and the Defence Department (under Rumsfeld) waiting for confrontation and blocking any serious prospect of an engagement with Tehran. Consequently, whilst the Administration left diplomacy to the Europeans, it never threw its weight behind the EU diplomatic effort. With Iraq, Afghanistan and the broader 'war on terror' taking the bulk of the Administration's attention, the urgency of dealing with Iran one way or another has simply not been there.

However, whilst Bush has largely continued in the same direction as his predecessors and has not focused his attention on dealing with Tehran directly, his wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq have profoundly transformed Iran's international environment with major implications for US-Iran relations. With the Taliban and Saddam Hussein removed from power and the Shia majority emerging as the dominant force in Iraq, Iran's strategic position has been boosted to a point that rulers in Tehran could only have

dreamt about prior to 9/11. Iran is not only surrounded now by friendly regimes but it also wields considerable power both in Iraq and Afghanistan, which when added to its influence in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza essentially means that Tehran has emerged as the most powerful regional actor in the Middle East. Ironically, Iran itself has done little to achieve this new status. It was the US that did all the work. Leaving behind an emboldened, defiant and increasingly belligerent Iran constitutes one of the gravest aspects of Bush's legacy. His successor will have to deal with a much stronger and more dangerous Iran than Bush faced when coming to office in 2001.

China policy: no revolution

4

Introduction

The conventional view of Bush's China policy is that at the beginning of his presidency he pursued a hawkish approach but that this changed following the events of 9/11. In effect, rather than being a rival, China became America's ally in the war on terror.[121] This view is not incorrect but it requires certain qualifications. George W. Bush was not alone in preaching a tougher stance on China during the elections and at the outset of his presidency, only to then settle on the continuation of the policies of his predecessors. The same was true of Ronald Reagan who argued against Carter's opening to China and in favour of 'restoring' America's relations with Taiwan. He did neither of these and instead he signed an agreement with Beijing (1982 communiqué) in which the US committed itself to keep reducing its arms sales to Taiwan – a provision that Reagan, unlike some of his successors, actually respected. Bill Clinton criticised President George H.W. Bush (the father of the current president) for his allegedly tepid response to Beijing's crushing of the pro-democracy protests in 1989. However, it was under the Clinton presidency that the US removed almost all sanctions against China imposed in response to the Tiananmen Square massacre. The fact that Bush's China policy evolved from its early belligerence to the pursuit of closer relations with Beijing is in fact not at all unusual when seen in the context of the record of his predecessors.

The second qualification is that Bush's early tough tone about China tends to be exaggerated not least because it focuses on traditional security issues. However, from China's point of view the area that matters most is trade and the economy. Here Bush proved to be a good friend of China, largely ignoring the growing protectionist lobby in the Congress and in society at large, despite the fact that America's trade deficit with China ballooned under his watch to historic proportions.

121. For example, see Wang Xianyan & Sun Yan, 'Tentative Analysis of the Adjustment of US China Policy', *International Strategic Studies*, China Institute for International Strategic Studies, March 2006; Yuan Peng, 'China Policy under the Next Bush Administration', *The Jamestown Foundation China Brief*, vol. 4, no. 22, 11 November 2004.

On the whole, Bush's China policy has not been revolutionary and it fits with the mainstream Republican tradition since the Nixon years. Bush retained a robust security posture in East Asia and reasserted the value of America's traditional alliances in the area, especially with Japan. Like all his predecessors Bush warned China against invading Taiwan, but he also continuously stressed his support for the One-China policy. On trade Bush also followed the Nixonian tradition of drawing China into the global economy, despite the fact that this policy had lost much of its support in the US.

Two areas where Bush promised change were Taiwan and North Korea. They are looked at here in greater detail as is the topic of Sino-American trade, which remained the most important aspect of the relationship.

Taiwan

Bush made a considerable deal out of his seemingly 'tough' stance on Taiwan and especially of his pledge that the US 'would do whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend itself'. These were perhaps the strongest words uttered on this issue by a sitting president since the US withdrew its ambassador from Taiwan and established official relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1979; however, when seen against the background of America's Taiwan policy, Bush's statement was not revolutionary. Most importantly, Bush has never really departed from the principle underpinning America's position on the defence of the island – the so-called 'strategic ambiguity'.

Strategic ambiguity

America's relations with Taiwan have been the most contentious issue of its relationship with China. Contrary to common belief, the US has never officially committed itself to the defence of the island. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), adopted by the Congress as the basis for regulating America's relations with the island in 1979, does not oblige the US to resort to military intervention in the event of an attack. The TRA speaks merely about the US interest in a *peaceful* resolution to the Taiwan question, stating in this context that a forceful action would be of 'grave concern to the

United States' and that Washington policy is to 'maintain the capacity of the United States to resist (...) coercion' in addressing the Taiwanese issue. In this context the TRA provides for the sale of US defence articles and services to Taiwan that 'may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defence capability'.[122]

However, as long as the Cold War endured, Washington was willing to compromise with the mainland even in such sensitive matters as its arms sales to Taiwan. In a joint US-PRC communiqué, issued in August 1982, the PRC stated that its 'fundamental policy' was to resolve the Taiwanese issue peacefully. In return, Washington stated that it did not 'seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan ... and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms'.[123]

Following the normalisation of US-China relations and the adoption of the TRA, Washington's policy towards Taiwan has been referred to as 'strategic ambiguity'. On the one hand, Washington recognised the PRC as the only legitimate representative of China and it agreed with the principles of the 'One China' policy. On the other hand, the TRA provided for unofficial yet still extensive relations with Taiwan and continuing arms sales to the island. Whilst the 1982 US-China communiqué implied an eventual ending of the sale of American weapons, any termination of the sales was made conditional on America's assessment of whether Beijing was pursuing a peaceful or coercive course *vis-à-vis* Taiwan. The wording of the TRA also left it open whether the US would or would not defend the island in the event of aggression from the mainland.

'Strategic ambiguity' proved effective in preserving the delicate balance in the US-China-Taiwan triangle until the end of the Cold War and even later into the early 1990s. However, the post-Cold War rise of China and the weakening of the strategic rationale for the continuing Sino-American *rapprochement* put America more firmly in the position of Taiwan's protector. Rather than decreasing the sale of its arms, as suggested by the terms of the 1982 communiqué, the sales of US weapons to Taiwan have actually expanded, although, according to the US, this was always in response to China's belligerence. Hence, in 1992 the US sold 150 F-16 aircraft to Taiwan. During the Clinton era the arms sales as well as security cooperation with Taipei expanded, especially following the 1996 Chinese provocation against the island. More recently, in 2001 President Bush approved a sale of Kidd-class

122. As quoted in Kerry B. Dumbaugh, 'Taiwan's Political Status', *CRS Report*, 23 February 2006, p. 4.

123. As quoted in Kerry B. Dumbaugh, 'Taiwan: Recent Developments and U.S. Policy Choices', *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 24 January 2006, p. 3.

destroyers, antisubmarine P-3 'Orion' aircraft and diesel submarines.[124] More sales followed towards the end of Bush's presidency, although not as much as Washington deemed necessary for a credible defence of the island.[125]

The US has also made some bold moves and issued declarations suggesting that it would resist any military aggression against Taiwan. In 1996 the PRC fired missiles close to the Taiwanese shore in an apparent attempt to influence the presidential elections there – allegedly, to discourage the islanders against voting for Lee Teng-hui who was critical of Beijing's version of the One-China policy.[126] President Clinton responded by sending two US carrier battle groups to the area and strengthening security links with the island. In other words 'strategic ambiguity' seemed to be giving way to a more clear and assertive position on the Taiwanese issue in Washington before Bush became president. On the other hand, the US did not abandon its 'One-China' policy and it continued to oppose Taiwanese independence.

Bush's challenge to the strategic ambiguity

During his 2000 campaign and at the beginning of his presidency Bush made several statements that were interpreted as effectively ending the 'strategic ambiguity' of the former administrations by declaring that the US would use military means to defend the island in the event of an attack from the mainland.[127] These interpretations were often exaggerated; in fact, Bush always stopped short of saying that America would respond *militarily* in case of a conflict in the Taiwanese strait and he also stressed that the US was against the island's independence. However, it is true that Bush's statements suggested America's new assertiveness, if not belligerence, in dealing with cross-strait relations. Relations with Taiwan were also one of the few foreign policy issues that Bush chose to highlight during his campaign as a point of divergence with the Clinton Administration.

At the beginning of Bush's presidency there were indeed some reasons to believe that the US was moving away from its traditional position on the issue. In April 2001 the President announced that he would 'normalise' the process of arms sales to Taiwan by dropping the 20 year-old annual arms talk process in favour of routine considerations of Taiwan's requests, just as has been the case with any other government. At the same time the

124. Ibid, p.1.

125. Shirley Kan, 'Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990', *CRS Report for Congress*, 8 January 2008.

126. Ross Terrill, *The New Chinese Empire and What it Means for the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2003) pp. 13-14.

127. See: *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, 26 April 2001. Also David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Random House, January 2003).

Administration announced the sale of Kidd-class destroyers, anti-submarine P-3 'Orion' aircraft and diesel submarines, which signified a considerable increase in the volume of sales.[128]

There has also been an expansion in US-Taiwanese security co-operation. In 2001 US military officers participated, for the first time since official relations were broken in 1979, as observers in Taiwan's military exercise. Similarly, fellows from Taiwan were for the first time admitted to the Executive Course in the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies of the Pacific Command. The US and Taiwan militaries set up a hotline to deal with a possible crisis in the strait and reportedly they discussed setting up an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) link to monitor the movements of the Chinese army's (PLA) submarines. In 2002, for the first time since 1979 the US assigned a *de facto* defence attaché to the American Institute in Taipei and some senior administration officials started to refer to Taiwan as a 'major non-NATO ally'.[129]

Bush's early presidency was also marked by changing the policy on high-level visits and exchanges. In March 2002 Defence Minister Tang Yiau-ming became the first Taiwanese Minister of Defence to be granted a US visa to travel on an official visit to the United States. Tang Yiau-ming met with Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz. Wolfowitz also received the deputy Minister of Defence Kang Ning-hsiang, who became the first senior Taiwanese official to visit Washington in his official capacity since 1979. Similar visits, participation of US personnel during military exercises in Taiwan and other aspects of security cooperation became more routine in the subsequent years of Bush's presidency.

However, these new developments in US-Taiwanese security cooperation remained limited in scope and intensity. Any stronger cooperation was complicated and impeded by the domestic developments in Taiwan and of course by America's war on terror. The arms sales became the subject of domestic controversy in Taiwan, especially in the newly assertive parliament – the Legislative Yuan (LY), which has been dominated by the opposition Kuomintang (KT) party. The Kuomintang continued to block the passage of the special budget requested by the Taiwanese Ministry of Defence that would allow the purchase of missile defence systems as recommended by the Pentagon. The referendum on the issue, held on 20 March 2004, failed because of the insufficient turnout. Despite the pressures from Washington, Taiwan's defence budget

128. Shirley Kan, op. cit. in note 125.

129. Ibid.

declined from 2.9% of GDP in 2000 to 2.1% in 2006. It picked up marginally in 2007 and 2008 (2.5%) but it still remained well below the levels recommended by the Pentagon.[130] As a result, doubts started to surface in Washington whether Taiwan was actually determined to deter China or whether it had not just decided to free ride and fully rely on the American protection.

The second, equally, if not more, compelling reason preventing a more radical change in Taiwan policy was the need to build an international coalition in the wake of 9/11.

Full circle

Bush's rhetoric on China became far more cautious in the years following the terrorist attacks on the US. The same was true regarding the sales of arms to Taiwan. Whilst Washington continued to advocate that Taiwan boosts its defensive capacities – especially missile defence system – it became reluctant to authorise the sale of arms that could be seen by the mainland as offensive. Hence, the Bush Administration twice refused to allow the sale of 66 F-16 fighters requested by the Taiwanese Ministry of Defence.[131] In April 2007 the Administration also expressed its disapproval about Taiwan's development of its own land-attack cruise missile, considered by Washington to be an offensive weapon.[132]

The President clearly drew some lessons from his father's decision to sell 150 F-16s in 1992, which was interpreted by China and even some domestic critics in the US as a violation of the 1982 communiqué on reducing arms sales. At the time, the Chinese reacted to this sale by pulling out of the 'Arms Control in the Middle East' talks in 1992. Clearly George W. Bush would not wish to repeat the same situation and antagonise the Chinese at a sensitive time whilst dealing with the North Korean and Iran's nuclear programmes.

After his hawkish remarks about helping Taiwan to defend itself, Bush has also sought to distance himself from the pro-independence policies of Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian. When the Taiwanese President advocated holding a referendum on independence and a new constitution, Bush reacted by appearing with the PRC Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in the Oval Office and publicly stating his disapproval of the actions of the Taiwanese leader.[133] When asked by the Congress whether the US would come to Taiwan's rescue in the event of an attack from

130. Ibid.

131. See: http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2007/10/04/2003381597.

132. See: http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Taiwan_Test_Fires_Cruise_Missile_Capable_Of_Striking_China_999.html.

133. See: http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,105239,00.html.

the mainland following a unilateral declaration of independence by the island, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly responded by reaffirming that leaders in Taiwan 'misunderstood' if they believed that President Bush supports whatever they do.[134]

Following the re-election of President Chen Shui-bian in March 2004 and his advocacy of a new constitution for Taiwan by 2008, the Bush Administration sought to discourage the Taiwanese from changing the *status quo* and distance itself further from the pro-independence faction in Taipei. Speaking to the Congress, shortly after the Taiwanese elections, James Kelly clarified the US's position by stating that the US would not support independence for Taiwan or other unilateral moves that would change the *status quo* 'as we define it'. Kelly warned that the US efforts at deterring a PRC attack would fail if China were to become convinced that Taiwan had embarked on a course towards a permanent separation from the mainland. Kelly also warned that China's threats of military action in the event of the declaration of independence are credible and that there are limits to what actions by the Taiwanese government, such as changing the constitution, the US would support.

In June 2005 Bush himself clarified his interpretation of the US's obligation under the TRA in the following words: 'If China were to invade unilaterally, we would rise up in the spirit of the Taiwan Relations Act. If Taiwan were to declare independence unilaterally, it would be a unilateral decision, that would then change the US equation, the US look at (...) the decision-making process'.[135] In fact, the US not only strongly discouraged the Taiwanese from moving towards independence but it also encouraged the cross-strait dialogue. For example, in his congressional testimony James Kelly stressed that arms sales to Taiwan are not designed only to serve as a deterrent but also to boost Taiwan's confidence, allowing the island to engage in dialogue on more equal terms with the mainland. Taiwan should not interpret the sales as giving it a 'blank check to resist such dialogue', warned Kelly.[136]

Bush's apparent retreat from his early hawkishness on the Taiwanese question begs the question of what remains of his challenge to the 'strategic ambiguity' doctrine. The answer is: not much, if anything. The US's position on Taiwan remains governed by strategic considerations *vis-à-vis* the PRC and, on the other hand, by the TRA. That the 'US would do whatever it takes to help

134. Kan, op. cit. in note 125, p.22.

135. President George W.Bush, 'Your World with Neil Cavuto', Fox News, 8 June 2005. See: http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,158960,00.html.

136. Kan, op. cit. in note 125, p.38.

Taiwan defend itself' as stated by Bush is implicit in the TRA. But at the same time the Bush Administration has probably done even more than its predecessors to prevent a crisis in the strait, not least by discouraging Taiwanese independence. There has been no 'ambiguity' in Bush's position on Taiwan's independence, an ambition which he rejected on a number of occasions. Washington also made it clear that should Taipei go ahead with pursuing a permanent separation from the mainland, it should not feel entitled to America's military support.[137]

The results of the March 2008 elections in Taiwan that brought to power the pro-China nationalist party (KMT) and its leader Ma Ying-jeou as the new President were clearly welcomed in Washington. Commenting on the elections result Bush praised Ma and the Taiwanese people in the following words: 'I congratulate the people of Taiwan on the successful conclusion of their 22 March presidential election. Once again, Taiwan has demonstrated the strength and vitality of its democracy. I also congratulate Mr. Ma Ying-jeou on his victory.' The statement contrasted with the US position four years ago, when President Chen Shui-bian won his second term: back then it took several days for the Bush Administration to congratulate Chen specifically. At the time, the State Department's first post-election comment congratulated only the Taiwanese people, not Chen himself, reflecting the bilateral strains that had built up by then. In March 2008 the State Department was also originally scheduled to issue a statement, but Bush decided to strengthen his message and he issued the statement himself. It was clear that Washington was endorsing the *status quo* and the pro-China faction on the island.[138]

At the end of Bush's presidency the US's position on Taiwan remained as 'strategically ambiguous' as at the end of the President's predecessor's term in office. As argued above, in no small part Bush's pedalling back on this issue was caused by the need to secure China's cooperation on global and regional questions. North Korea has been the most obvious among these.

North Korea

North Korea was another issue where Bush promised a sweeping change – not least by including it in his axis of evil. Bush's criticism of Clinton's handling of Pyongyang was again one of the clearest

137. Banning Garrett, Jonathan Adams and Franklin Kramer, 'Taiwan in Search of a Strategic Consensus', *Issue Brief of the Atlantic Council of the United States*, March 2006.

138. See: http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2008/03/23/taiwan_elects_pro_china_leader/; http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2008/03/23/2003406751.

points of his foreign policy programme during the 2000 campaign. However, as in the case of Taiwan, Bush's departure from Clinton's DPRK policy was in fact short-lived. In addition, Bush came to rely on China's intermediary role *vis-à-vis* Pyongyang to a greater extent than was the case with any of his predecessors.

Background: from foes to friends

Historically, the US and China were at the frontline of the Cold War divide in the Korean peninsula. During the Korean War US marines faced the Chinese 'voluntary army' that crossed the border to support the North Korean communist forces. Following the Armistice Agreement the US signed a Mutual Defence Treaty with the South and it effectively became the sponsor state of the Republic of Korea (ROK) basing its troops directly over the Southern side of the Armistice Line poised to deter aggression from the North. China played a similar role *vis-à-vis* the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), signing a bilateral treaty with Pyongyang and (alongside with the Soviet Union) committing itself to the economic and military assistance to the North.

This state of play remained in place unchallenged throughout the Cold War; in fact, much of it persists. Whilst China established diplomatic relations with the South in 1992, the US has not to date followed suit with the North. Some American forces have been pulled out from South Korea but the US continues to maintain a large military presence there. In the meantime China maintained and, indeed, increased its position as the DPRK's sponsor and its main economic lifeline. China accounts now for 40 percent of the North's trade (twice as much as South Korea), it continues to supply the North with essential fuels and grain and the DPRK's economy is increasingly incorporated into China's development plans for its North East regions.[139]

Perhaps most importantly, China is in favour of retaining the *status quo* in the Korean peninsula and preventing a collapse of the DPRK. There are many reasons why China chooses to pursue this approach, not least because of a likely flood of North Korean refugees across its 1,400 km long border and the subsequent economic implications for its weak northeast regions. But, an expectation that the US could dominate a future unified Korea forms an important part of Beijing's rationale for its continuing support for the current DPRK regime.

139. 'China and North Korea: Comrades Forever?', *Asia Report no. 112*, International Crisis Group, 1 February 2006, pp.2-4.

However, despite these historical and contemporary differences, the US and China share one very important objective – a strong preference for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. For America, a nuclear North Korea represents a direct threat to its position in the region – where it may attack or blackmail its allies Japan or South Korea – and in the longer term the DPRK may develop a capacity (cf. the Dapodong-II missile, which is planned to have 4000-mile range) to reach the US itself.[140] Even more urgently, the US is seriously concerned about the possibility of Pyongyang selling its nuclear technology to terrorists, which is not an impossible prospect considering the DPRK's dire economic situation and the regime's involvement in illegal activities (for example counterfeiting US currency and trade in narcotics).[141]

China opposes North Korea's nuclear programme for all variety of reasons of which perhaps the most important are its regional security implications and especially the reaction of Japan. China sees the progressive 'normalisation' of the Japanese defence policy as largely prompted by North Korea's aggressive posture, such as the incident in which the DPRK fired a missile that flew over Japan in 1998 or the revealed kidnappings of Japanese citizens by the North Korean secret service.[142] According to the Chinese, these incidents are providing Japan with an 'excuse' to remilitarise and change its constitution in a way that would allow it to take a more proactive security role in the region and possibly balance against China's influence.[143] China is also worried that a further development of the North's nuclear programme could prompt a domino effect in the region with Japan, South Korea and even Taiwan (a most alarming prospect for Beijing) going nuclear too. There are also environmental concerns for Beijing to consider, such as the possibility of an accident at a North Korean nuclear facility along the border, which would be likely to result in a large-scale contamination of the Chinese north eastern regions.[144]

Historical differences and their strategic rivalry are impediments to US-China cooperation *vis-à-vis* North Korea. On the other hand, on the most important question – the nuclear issue – the interests of Washington and Beijing are congruent.

From engagement to the Axis of Evil and back again

Dealing with North Korea's nuclear programme dates back to the Clinton era. In 1993 the International Energy Atomic Agency

140. For more on the missile programme, see Jimian Yang et al, 'New Missions for China and US, Strategy Making & Policy Options', Shanghai Institute for International Affairs, February 2006), pp. 72-3.

141. William J. Perry, 'In Search of a North Korean Policy', *Washington Post*, 11 October 2006.

142. Yang et al, op. cit. in note 140, pp. 72-3.

143. Ibid, p. 70.

144. 'China and North Korea: Comrades Forever?', op. cit. in note 139, p.12.

(IAEA) discovered the evidence of Pyongyang violating the rules of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). When confronted with a demand for special inspections, the North refused and announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT. In spring 1994 Clinton responded by threatening a war but at the same time pursuing a diplomatic effort led by former President Carter. On 21 October 1994 the US and North Korea signed a formal accord called the Agreed Framework. Under the terms of this document the DPRK renewed its commitment to the NPT, locked up its fuel rods that were used in the production of plutonium and allowed the IAEA inspectors to monitor its nuclear facility.

In exchange the US promised to provide the North with two light-water reactors (the target date for the delivery of the first reactor was 2003). Together with South Korea the US would also supply the DPRK with economic aid and normalise diplomatic relations. As we know now, the framework agreement did not deliver on its promise and by the late 1990s relations were returning to crisis mode. The Congress did not approve funds for light-water reactors and official relations were not normalised. In 1996 a North Korean spy submarine was intercepted in South Korean waters. Seoul responded by suspending its economic aid to the North. In the meantime DPRK never stopped its clandestine nuclear programme, although it was considerably slowed by the IAEA inspection and the nuclear rods remained locked up.

However, shortly before the end of Clinton's second term in office relations with Pyongyang improved again. Kim Jong-il – the North Korean 'Dear Leader' – invited Clinton to Pyongyang, offering a treaty banning the production of long-range missiles and the export of all missiles. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made an advance trip to Pyongyang in October 2000 and the North Korean and American diplomats were working frantically trying to hammer out a deal before Clinton stepped down. Bill Clinton dedicated the last weeks of his presidency to the Middle East peace process and the Administration simply ran out of time. According to Madeleine Albright the deal was 95 percent ready by the time Clinton left the White House.[145] Bush could either 'pick up where Clinton left off' and finalise the treaty with the DPRK or scrap it. He chose the latter option.

A few months into becoming Bush's Secretary of State Colin Powell committed his first gaffe, stating on the eve of the visit by the South Korean President that on North Korea 'Bush would

145. Madeleine Albright, *Madame Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Miramax, 2005).

pick up where Clinton had left off'. As it shortly became embarrassingly clear to the Secretary of State, his statement did not reflect the President's thinking. On the following day Powell was forced to backtrack, saying 'I leaned too forward in my skis'.[146] On the same day, during the joint press conference with South Korean President Kim Dae Jung, Bush criticised Seoul's 'sunshine policy' of *rapprochement* with the North. Seeking to distance himself from Clinton's policy of engaging with the North, instead, Bush chose to pursue further isolation of Pyongyang. Following 9/11, in his first State of the Union address, Bush declared North Korea alongside Iran and Iraq to be parts of the 'axis of evil'. China condemned the speech and especially the characterisation of North Korea as an 'evil regime'.[147]

Relations with the DPRK soon deteriorated further as Washington revealed that Pyongyang admitted to having a programme of enriching uranium for use in nuclear weapons, which was in clear violation of the 1994 Framework Agreement. Following the threat from DPRK to resume its missile testing, the US and Japan suspended fuel oil shipments and few month later Pyongyang threatened to pull out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and even to respond militarily to a possible imposition of sanctions.

China played a crucial role in defusing these tensions and bringing the US and North Korea to the negotiating table. During the spring and summer of 2003 China arranged for a trilateral meeting, which was then expanded to the so-called Six-Party Talks where Russia, Japan and South Korea also participated. China was also the main architect of the failed agreement following the fourth round of Six-Party Talks in September 2005. This agreement was meant to end the DPRK's nuclear programme and its return to the NPT in exchange for America's security guarantees and international help in the construction of light-water reactors in North Korea.[148] Although the September 2005 deal subsequently collapsed, Washington's cooperation with Beijing has only increased over time. In less than a year Presidents Bush and Hu Jintao had three meetings and six telephone conversations to discuss the North Korean issue. There have been numerous interactions between the Chinese Foreign Office and the State Department including Beijing sending its special envoy to the US and frequent visits by Chris Hill (US special envoy responsible for the DPRK dossier) to China.[149]

146. Quoted in Fred Kaplan, 'Rolling blunder: how the Bush administration let North Korea get nukes', *Washington Monthly*, May 2004.

147. See: http://www.10thnpc.org.cn/english/2002/Feb/26297.htm.

148. See 'Vague Statement Appeases Needs of All Sides' and 'China basks in Achievement of Bringing Pyongyang in From the Cold', *Financial Times*, 20 September 2005.

149. Yang et al, op. cit. in note 140, p. 75.

Whilst the US and China agreed on their opposition to the North Korean nuclear programme, until recently they have had very divergent views on the best tactics to be applied *vis-à-vis* Pyongyang. Washington has been continuously in favour of sanctions whilst Beijing has preferred dialogue and negotiations. However, following the nuclear test apparently carried out by North Korea on 9 October 2006 both the US and China voted at the United Nations in favour of a resolution demanding an immediate return of the DPRK to Six-Party Talks and imposing sanctions (under chapter 7, though excluding the use of force) against Pyongyang.[150] Although subsequently some differences have emerged in Washington's and Beijing's respective interpretations of the sanctions (with China declaring that it would not search North Korean cargos) the mere fact that for the first time China endorsed putative measures against its protégé demonstrates the growing convergence of American and Chinese interests on the issue.

From the start of 2007 the atmosphere changed and progress was made in relations between US and North Korea. A new round of talks started and North Korea agreed to take the first steps towards nuclear disarmament, among others shutting down its main nuclear reactor and allow UN inspectors back into the country within 60 days. In return, it will receive aid in the form of heavy-fuel oil.

In early October 2007, North Korea agreed to disable all of its nuclear facilities by the end of the year, in a move that the Bush Administration hailed as a diplomatic victory that could serve as a model for how to deal with Iran, which has defied American efforts to rein in its nuclear ambitions. The agreement set out the first specific timetable for the North to disclose all its nuclear programmes and disable all facilities in return for 950,000 metric tons of fuel oil or its equivalent in economic aid. There is no doubt that China played a key role in facilitating the agreement, which was underlined by the fact that it was announced in Beijing.

On 9 May 2008, North Korea finally handed over to the US 18,000 pages of documents related to its plutonium programme dating from 1990 (elsewhere listed as 1987). The documents contain information about North Korea's three major campaigns to reprocess plutonium for nuclear weapons, in 1990, 2003 and 2005. But the documents do not include information on two other areas about which North Korea has promised to be forthcoming – a uranium programme that some officials in the Bush

150. Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test by Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Resolution 1718 (14 October 2006). See: http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8853.doc.htm.

Administration regard as another track toward weapons development, and North Korea's involvement in the proliferation of nuclear material. State Department officials nevertheless described this move as an important step, saying that they hope it will help to resolve a dispute over how much plutonium North Korea holds.

The acquisition of the documents is the latest step in the Bush Administration's effort to complete a nuclear pact with North Korea before it leaves office in January. The nuclear deal has come under fire from some conservatives, both within and outside of the Administration, who contend that North Korea cannot be trusted to end its nuclear programme. In return for the information it seeks on plutonium, the Administration relaxed a demand for North Korea to admit that it supplied Syria with nuclear technology. The United States also indicated that it will postpone a demand that North Korea provide an immediate and full account of its fledgling uranium programme. The State Department spokesman said that officials would take time to review the documents to determine whether North Korea's declaration about its plutonium programme is satisfactory. He said that any final agreement would include a strict verification process for all North Korean nuclear activities.

Two points are to be made about the nature of Bush's Korean policy. Firstly, Bush effectively 'picked up where Clinton left off' – only it took him six years of his presidency to arrive at this point. In the meantime the attempt to isolate the DPRK and coerce it to accept an agreement on Bush's terms manifestly failed. The diplomatic route pursued by Washington since 2006 is no different in spirit from the agreement that Clinton negotiated at the end of his presidency. Secondly, regardless of whether the deal with the DPRK will hold or break, as all the previous agreements did, China came to play the role of a broker and a facilitator and the US is now effectively relying on it in its volatile relations with Pyongyang.

Trade and economy

In contrast to his positions on Taiwan and North Korea Bush never preached any revolution in America's economic relations with China. Against considerable opposition in his own party Bush supported China's WTO membership and he endorsed President Clin-

ton's decision to extend Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to China on a permanent basis.[151] Although Bush refused to refer to the relationship as a 'strategic partnership' it was under his watch that America's trade with the PRC expanded and the level of interdependence between these two nations grew to an unprecedented degree.

Total US-China trade rose from $120 billion in 2000, on the eve of the Clinton presidency, to $343 billion in 2006. Whilst the EU has recently become China's main trading partner (overtaking the US) the US remains its biggest export market. For the US China is now its third trading partner, its second largest source of imports and its third largest export market. The US's trade with China has recorded a rapidly growing deficit since the late 1980s, reaching $232 billion in 2006.

In 2006 the US imported goods worth $287.8 billion from China (whilst its exports were worth only $55.2 billion), which accounted for 14.5% of total US imports. The importance of China as a source of US imports has grown from eighth in 1990 to second in 2005. Moreover, whilst in the past the US was mostly importing labour-intensive and unsophisticated products (toys, games, apparel), the proportion of technologically advanced products (such as computers) has steadily risen in recent years.[152] The ever-expanding deficit has increasingly alarmed the Congress, which responded with the legislation aimed at pressuring China to open up its market to US products and change its monetary policy (appreciation of the yuan), which is seen in the US as the major source of the deficit.[153]

The Chinese currency, the yuan, was pegged at 8.28 to the US dollar between 1994 and 2005. In order to maintain this level of exchange the Chinese government intervened in the international market and it imposed restrictions and controls over the movement of capital in China. American policymakers and business leaders argued that the yuan was undervalued *vis-à-vis* the dollar by 15-40% and that the policy was hurting US producers especially in the manufacturing sector. Members of the Congress have called on the Administration to pressurise China to appreciate its currency or to float it freely on the international market.

Beijing has been reluctant to respond to these pressures arguing that its currency policy was not designed to promote exports but to maintain economic stability at a time of major structural reforms.[154] However, in July 2005 China announced a change of

151. 'The 2000 Campaign: The Texas Governor; Bush Pressing Republicans on China Vote, Gently', *New York Times*, 5 May 2000.

152. All data here quoted after Wayne M. Morrison, 'China-U.S. Trade Issues', *CRS Brief for Congress*, 21 March 2006.

153. For a detailed US perspective on these questions see ibid.

154. Fan Shengqiu, 'An Assessment of the World Economic Situation in 2005' in *International Strategic Studies*, China Institute for International Strategic Studies, January 2006, pp. 34-41.

its policy – an immediate appreciation of the yuan *vis-à-vis* the US dollar by 2.1% and moving towards an adjustable exchange rate based on movements within the basket of designated currencies (US dollar, the Japanese yen, the euro and the South Korean won). Still, this change has been seen in the US as insufficient and calls (including a threat of a Senate bill introducing a 27% tariff on Chinese products) for a more thorough reform have continued.[155]

The other major economic dispute concerns violations of US intellectual property rights (IPR) in China. According to American sources, counterfeiting US products takes place on a massive scale in China depriving US producers of licence fees. For example it is estimated that counterfeits constitute between 15-20% of all products made in China and account for about 8% of its GDP. Industry analysts estimate that IPR piracy costs US copyright firms $2.3 billion in lost sales in 2005. The piracy rate for IPR-related products, such as films, music and software, is over 90%.

According to the terms of its WTO accession (November 2001) China was obliged to bring its IPR laws into compliance with the organisation's standards. China has subsequently passed relevant legislation and the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has stated on a number of occasions that China has indeed made much progress in creating a legal framework to deal with piracy.[156] However, whilst in terms of anti-piracy legislation China may be close to international standards, its enforcement record is still rather lax. In the rare cases when IPR-offenders are caught they are subjected to mild penalties. The widespread corruption is also a factor here with some governmental agencies being 'encouraged' to be less vigilant in pursuing piracy.

This economic relationship is certainly a difficult one with the issues of trade deficit, piracy and Chinese acquisition of American companies becoming an integral part of the 'China threat' discourse in the US. However, if some interpreted Bush's denunciation of the 'strategic partnership' with China as suggesting a policy of economic nationalism, the President proved them wrong. Bush resisted pressures from Congress to pass putative measures aimed at the protection of the US domestic market. Moreover, economic relations with China became in fact closer and more interdependent during Bush's presidency. In particular, China has effectively financed a considerable share of America's budget deficit, much of which has been spent on fighting the war in Iraq. The PRC is now the second (after Japan) purchaser of US govern-

155. Morrison, op. cit. in note 152.

156. 'US-China Trade Relations: Entering a New Phase of Greater Accountability and Enforcement', United States Trade Representative, Washington DC, February 2006.

ment bonds with its acquisitions amounting to $257 billion at the end of 2005. Some US analysts worry that should the Congress be successful in pushing China to appreciate its currency this would have a negative effect on the level of China's purchasing of US bonds, which could result in higher interest rates possibly leading to the slowdown of the US economy. In other words, the Chinese need the Americans to keep buying their products but the Americans need the Chinese to keep buying their bonds.

Whilst China and the US are bound to disagree on some economic issues they do have much more in common than it may appear from focusing on trade deficit or IPR. Most importantly they both embrace globalisation and both share a belief in the value of the market economy. Bush has embraced a benign view of economic relations with the PRC and continued to encourage a greater opening up of the Chinese economy. In this he has followed a mainstream Republican tradition, although conditions have changed to an unrecognisable degree since the days of Nixon or even Bush's father. America can no longer play the role of China's mentor, economically the two nations are becoming peers and for some in the US China is in fact an economic threat. It is by no means certain that Bush's benign view of economic relations with China will be pursued by his successor.

Bush's legacy and China in 2008 elections

In his early days Bush and his team chose to stake out China as the area where he would prove his conservative credentials. Bush's China approach was outlined then in the article by Condoleeza Rice entitled 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest'. In the article Rice laid out some elements of continuity with the outgoing Democrat administration – especially pursuing China's integration with the international economy and a cautious support for democracy and human rights. However, first and foremost Rice emphasised divergences with the Clinton's outgoing Administration, especially in assessing China's security posture in East Asia. On this issue Rice wrote: '...China is a great power with unresolved vital interests, particularly concerning Taiwan and the South China Sea. China resents the role of the United States in the Asia Pacific region. This means that China is not a 'status quo' power but one that would like to alter Asia's balance of power in its own

favour. *That alone makes it a strategic competitor, not the "strategic partner" the Clinton administration once called it.*'[157]

This realist perspective emphasising conflict of interests between Great Powers (incidentally applied not only to China but also Russia) became symptomatic of Bush's early foreign policy approach. During his 2000 campaign Bush famously declared that China policy would be the first policy he would change once he became president.[158] He argued that America's Asia policy should be less focused on China and more concerned with traditional allies in the region, who, he argued, were neglected during the Clinton era.

Bush certainly tried to sound hawkish on relations with Beijing and in doing so he was probably genuine. Assertiveness *vis-à-vis* this new emerging power fitted well with Bush's conservative worldview, wherein the world was ruled by Great Powers – natural rivals not partners. In this perspective any sign of America's will to compromise would be interpreted as a weakness, hence the need to reinforce pro-US alliances, especially with Taiwan and Japan. Naturally, this prioritisation of East Asia, China in particular, as America's top security concern radically altered in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks.

In the aftermath of al-Qaeda's attack the strategic focus in Washington shifted. With the Administration embarking on 'the war on terror' and preparing the challenge to the *status quo* in the Middle East, the idea of hedging Great Powers Russia and China became a distant priority. Whilst still viewed as a competitor, China also became an instant ally. President Jiang Zemin was amongst the first world leaders to have a telephone conversation with Bush after 9/11 in which he condemned the attacks and offered to strengthen bilateral cooperation with the US on counter-terrorism.[159]

China voted in favour of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 that criminalised state support for terrorist groups.[160] The PRC also supported the coalition campaign in Afghanistan and it pledged to contribute $150 million of assistance to Afghan reconstruction following the defeat of the Taliban. Bush responded by speaking about a 'grand strategic realignment' in the National Security Strategy of 2002, implying a new era of collaborative relations between China and Russia.

In the subsequent years Bush's war on terror caused some friction in Sino-American relations. America's presence in Afghanistan, in China's close proximity, caused some nervousness in Beijing. The

157. Condoleezza Rice, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000. [The italics in the quote are the author's emphasis.]

158. GOP Debate on the Larry King Show, 15 February 2000. See: http://www.issues2000.org/Celeb/George_W__Bush_Foreign_Policy.htm#China.

159. 'President Jiang Zemin had a Telephone Conversation with US president Bush', 13 September 2001. http://www.chinaembassy.org.pg/eng/xwdt/t47705.htm.

160. See: http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/557/43/PDF/N0155743.pdf?OpenElement.

conduct of the Afghan operation demonstrated to the Chinese the superiority of America's military and was one of the main inspirations behind China's defence reform and the rapid spike in defence spending and military modernisation. America's growing presence in Central Asia and in Afghanistan and the existence of US bases in Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan brought Russia and China together and was one of the main reasons for adding a defence dimension to the Shanghai cooperation Organisation.

However, whilst certain frictions in US-Chinese relations have been evident, China no longer presents a challenge that the US can afford to focus on. Faced with the terrorist threat, waging two simultaneous wars, Bush came to perceive China as a predictable power, hence an element of stability. In the three areas examined in this chapter (Taiwan, North Korea and trade) Bush did little that history will remember. In fact, it is difficult to show that Bush actually had a China policy. His attention has clearly been somewhere else and dealing with China has been left to professional deputy secretaries such as Zoellick and Negroponte and the Treasury.[161] Ironically, this meant that, despite the President's lack of attention, Bush's Administration has actually handled China pretty well.

China as an election issue

Bush has not revolutionised relations with China, but does that mean that he is leaving no legacy in this area? There is at least one aspect of Bush's approach to China that seems to be now generally accepted on both sides of the aisle. Bush's description of China as a competitor rather than a partner, that shocked some Democrats in 2000, has become a canon of political discourse in the US. Senator McCain has for long argued that China is a competitor and that Clinton's policy of treating it as a strategic partner was damaging to the 'strategic ambiguity' policy.[162] In this McCain has not been at variance with Bush. But, it was a little bit more surprising when during the Democrat debate Barack Obama characterised US-China relations in the following terms: 'neither our enemy nor our friend. *They are competitors*.'[163] In his *Foreign Affairs* 2008 Campaign piece Obama argued 'we will compete with China in some areas and cooperate in others. Our essential challenge is to build a relationship that broadens cooperation while strengthening our ability to compete'. However, in contrast to McCain Obama perceives China as primarily an economic rather than a strategic competitor.

161. The author would like to thank Ellen Frost for drawing this point to his attention.

162. GOP debate in Los Angeles, 2 March 2000. See: http://www.ontheissues.org/Senate/John_McCain_China.htm.

163. See: http://weblogs.chicagotribune.com/news/politics/blog/.

The tone of the China discourse in the 2008 campaign is on the whole closer to Bush's more sceptical rhetoric known from his 2000 campaign than to Bill Clinton's optimistic pronouncements. China is overwhelmingly seen as a competitor, whether from the point of view of the economy, energy markets or international security. This is, however, less the result of Bush's persuasion than the evolution of the international system during Bush's presidency. During Bush's time in office the economic power of the US has declined in relative terms whilst China's has grown. In the last eight years China has become a serious player on the international energy markets and it is now the most influential actor in Africa, where it has emerged as the winner over the Europeans and Americans in the competition for access to resources. China's military modernisation and its defence spending have expanded beyond the level of its impressive economic growth and the PRC has become the world's third military power – although according to the Pentagon it is already the second. In short, it is now generally assumed in the US that China will soon take over from America as the biggest world economy and that the twenty-first century will belong to Asia and not the western world.

Bush should be credited with having a more 'realistic' grasp of the implications of China's rise than Clinton did. On the other hand, arguably, some aspects of China's rise would have been less spectacular and its ability to compete weaker had it not been for some of Bush's policies and especially the war in Iraq. One of the most severe implications of the Iraq war has been the loss of America's prestige and the global outreach of its 'soft power'. In some areas of the world, such as in Africa, China is now moving ahead of the US as the admired model that these societies would like to emulate. However, whether China's rise is partly of Bush's own making or not, it is undeniable that the President's description of China as a 'strategic competitor' aptly reflects the general mood in the US, both among the left and the right, in 2008.

Reflecting this is the general mood of the 2008 campaign, during which both McCain and Obama have spoken about China sometimes respectfully but most of all critically. In particular, both candidates condemned China's crackdown on protests by Tibetans. Obama called on China to respect Tibet's religion and culture, and said China should grant Tibet 'genuine and meaningful autonomy.' Obama also said the Dalai Lama should be invited to visit China, 'as part of a process leading to his return.' In March

2008 Obama sent a letter to Bush calling on the President to urge China to 'make significant progress in resolving the Tibet issue.' Obama also argued that Bush should press the Chinese President Hu Jintao to negotiate with the Dalai Lama about his return to Tibet, to guarantee religious freedom for Tibetans, and to grant Tibet 'genuine autonomy.'[164]

In April 2008, Obama said President Bush should consider boycotting the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics and that the President should decide to attend based on whether China takes 'steps to help stop the genocide in Darfur and to respect the dignity, security, and human rights of the Tibetan people.'[165] McCain's position on the Tibet issue has been no different from Obama's. If anything, McCain has been even more affirmative, even going so far as to state that if he was President he would not attend the Olympics.[166] It does no service to the Chinese government, and certainly no service to the people of China, for the United States and other democracies to pretend that the suppression of rights in China does not concern us. It does, will and must concern us,' said McCain in April 2008.

The differences between Republicans and Democrats in their view of China are overall minor and ultimately boil down to a question of emphasis rather than content. Democrats tend to emphasise China's economic threat and its currency policy. For example, Obama promised to cosponsor a bill with Clinton to impose high duties on Chinese goods, intended to pressure China into reevaluating its currency.[167] Obama also spoke critically about China's record with protecting Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). McCain, on the other hand, has tended to focus on the hard security issues, arguing in favour of maintaining a robust military posture in East Asia aimed at 'hedging China'.[168]

Overall, there really is little new in the China conundrum during the 2008 campaign. As usual, the Democrats stress the economic issues while the Republicans prefer to talk about security, military matters and the balance of power in East Asia. Both parties are critical of China's human rights record. The general tone regarding China is now darker than it was at the end of the Clinton presidency but this is perhaps less to do with China itself than with the general pessimism pervading the US as eight years of Bush's presidency draw to a close. Bush's China policy has not been revolutionary; perhaps with the exception of trade policy, it is most likely that his successor's approach towards Beijing will remain the same.

164. See: http://obama.senate.gov/press/080328-obama_encourage_1/.

165. See: http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/0408/A_boycott_maybe.html.

166. See: http://www.cfr.org/publication/14759/candidates_on_us_policy_toward_china.html#125.

167. See: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e628b512-2b20-11dc-85f9-000b5df10621,dwp_uuid=9c33700c-4c86-11da-89df-0000779e2340.html.

168. See: http://www.conference.committee100.org/2005/files/McCain_transcript.pdf.

Bush's legacy: the shape of things to come

5

Introduction

Bush's presidency is not likely to be noted by the history books as a successful one but there is no doubt that it will be remembered as a watershed in America's grand strategy and its relations with the world. The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 changed the parameters of America's strategic thinking in much the same way that Pearl Harbour did in 1941. Bush responded to this challenge in a radical and, by most accounts, incompetent way. The failure to capture Osama bin Laden and marginalise the Taliban in Afghanistan, the instability in Iraq and the loss of America's prestige in the world are the most manifest elements of Bush's legacy. Under Bush's watch Iran grew into a defiant regional power, North Korea tested its nuclear bomb, Russia grew antagonistic again and China's challenge to America's global supremacy became real.

The blame for the failures of America's foreign policy during the last eight years is often put squarely on the shoulders of George W. Bush. This is perhaps unfair and more importantly it creates a wrong premise for thinking about US foreign policy after Bush. The current president is often accused of failing to prevent 9/11. As argued by his own counter-terrorism expert, Richard Clarke, Bush's Administration invested nowhere near as much in combating terrorism as it should have.[169] However, as clearly demonstrated in the findings of the 9/11 Commission, nor did the Clinton Administration.[170] After all, it was under Clinton's watch that the Taliban came to power and al-Qaeda trained under their protection. The CIA were well-informed about al-Qaeda camps and could have assassinated bin Laden had President Clinton agreed. He did not.

Bush is accused of having responded to 9/11 in a state-centric way by waging war against Iraq. This is not untrue, but Bush was hardly alone. The decision to invade Iraq was supported by Congress, with most prominent Democrats – such as Hillary Clinton, John Kerry and Joe Biden – voting in favour. American public opin-

169. Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies. Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

170. See http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf.

ion was also overwhelmingly in favour of this war and it continued to be so until 2005 when things started to go badly wrong in Iraq. The arguments that Bush manipulated both the public and the Congress are not incorrect but they give an incomplete picture. Whilst the Administration certainly was not entirely truthful in presenting its case in favour of the war, the members of the Congress had access to the National Intelligence Estimate that cast a sceptical light on the decision to invade Iraq. But very few, only four, senators bothered to read this document. While the public was certainly fed some exaggerated or even plainly false evidence about Iraq, it is also true that, in the immediate wake of 9/11, with no prompting from the White House a clear majority of Americans believed that Iraq was behind the attacks. Bush exploited America's belligerent mood but, crucially, he did not create it.

The second fallacy here is a widespread belief that, once the current Administration departs, America's foreign policy will simply return to what it had been before Bush's arrival. This expectation is simply naïve. The goalposts of American security policy were already being moved during Clinton's presidency and the experience of 9/11 has changed them irreversibly. Regardless of who replaces Bush, the next Administration will be under pressure to scale down America's involvement in Europe (why should the US remain in the Balkans or maintain its bases in Germany?) and replace it with growing interest in Asia, especially China. Tackling terrorism and extremism will undoubtedly remain the focus of the next presidency. The next president may adopt a hard or soft approach, or a mixture of the two, but this will be at the core of his foreign policy agenda. Bush departed from Clinton's rhetoric on globalisation and a new age in relations with the Great Powers. He openly argued that China and Russia are more competitors than partners. Bush's successor is likely to stick to this line. In short, regardless of who wins the elections, there may be more continuity in America's post-Bush foreign policy than is generally assumed.

This chapter summarises key aspects of Bush's foreign policy, its legacy and the policy proposals of his likely successors, Barack Obama and John McCain. The chapter also addresses some policy implications for the European Union.

Bush's legacy and key areas of US foreign policy

What follows is an overview of Bush's legacy in key areas of his foreign policy.

Iraq and Afghanistan

Key points:

- **Afghanistan**: Poor progress, resurgent Taliban, fragmented coalition.
- **Iraq**: Some progress since 2007 but reversible, domestic environment improved but highly unstable.

The overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan was quick and was less costly than generally anticipated – both in terms of human and material resources. The subsequent peace process, negotiated in Bonn, created promising conditions for national reconciliation by bringing together moderate Pashtuns (Karzai) and members of the Northern Alliance. However, since these initial successes, there has been little progress in Afghanistan. Most importantly, the US forces failed to capture bin Laden, despite, reportedly, knowing of his location in Tora Bora. The decision to delegate this task to Northern Alliance fighters, who apparently compromised the operation, is seen as the major fiasco of the campaign.

International public opinion was at the beginning largely supportive of the US operation, but this support was undermined by the unilateral pursuit of the US operation (Rumsfeld's rejection of NATO's offer of assistance) and the subsequent fallout over the war in Iraq. As a consequence, the post-invasion peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan has been perceived as 'America's War' and the European investment in the stabilisation of the country has often been exposed to domestic criticism of bailing out the Americans for their mistakes in Iraq.[171] This has had clear implications for the scope and character of the European involvement in the ISAF force, which has been numerically modest and in most cases guarded by caveats on the rules of engagement and scope of operations. On the eve of Bush's departure from office, the inter-

171. See: http://www.wsws.org/articles/2008/feb2008/nato-f13_prn.shtml.

national presence in Afghanistan is clearly insufficient and deeply fragmented.

At the same time, the domestic situation in Afghanistan has remained highly unstable with large swathes of the country, especially in the south and the east, beyond the control of the government in Kabul. Opium production has gone up and the Taliban have been resurgent. In other words, after initial successes the situation in Afghanistan has sharply deteriorated.

In Iraq there has been a tentative improvement since April 2007 following the surge policy and the change of tactics *vis-à-vis* the Sunni insurgents. Whilst the situation in Iraq remains dire and the progress made since 2007 is by no means irreversible, as riots in Basra in February 2008 demonstrated, there is no doubt that the overall level of violence has declined sharply and that the economy is growing. However, assuming that the progress in Iraq will continue, this improvement must be judged against an extremely high level of violence in 2006 at which point state structures were almost completely dysfunctional.

In mid-2008 it started to look as if Iraq has a chance of reaching some level of normalcy in the future. However, this is a far cry from the vision of a stable, prosperous and democratic Iraq that the Bush Administration had promised in the run-up to the war. The war is also a heavy burden on American tax-payers. According to the Iraqi Study Group report, in 2006 the monthly cost of the war amounted to $8 billion and the final costs were estimated to reach not less then $2 trillion.[172] All of this is happening at a time of overall economic uncertainty in the US, with the housing market crash and the expansion of the budget deficit.

Relations with Iran and North Korea: Non-Proliferation

Key points:

- **Iran**: No progress in diplomatic relations, Iran advanced its nuclear programme.
- **North Korea**: DPRK tested a nuclear weapon; negotiations in the framework of Six-Party Talks may lead to a comprehensive agreement.

172. See page 32 of the Report: http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf.

Bush's approach towards Iran has been to avoid bilateral negotiations, impose sanctions and to keep the threat of the use of force firmly on the table. This approach has not stopped Iran from advancing its nuclear programme nor has it marginalised it in the region. Iran has backtracked from suspending the process of uranium enrichment and has not joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Additional Protocol. It is unclear for now if Iran is indeed developing a nuclear weapon capacity or not (according to the recently published National Intelligence Estimate Tehran suspended this process in 2003); however, there is little doubt that Iran's capacity to produce a nuclear weapon has increased during Bush's presidency. US-Iran relations have become highly antagonistic and rumours of an American or Israeli air strike on Iran are routinely reported.

The story has been different regarding North Korea, although the outcome still remains to be seen. Initially, Bush pursued a very similar approach towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as towards Iran, with similar results. In November 2006 North Korea tested its nuclear bomb, a development that was greeted with universal condemnation, including from China.[173] Ever since, the Administration's efforts to reach an agreement with Pyongyang have increased. Bush wrote a personal letter to Kim Jong-il, which met with a positive response from the Korean leader and since then the prospect of reaching a comprehensive deal has become ever more plausible. It is possible, but far from certain, that Bush may leave behind a positive legacy in the context of America's relations with the DPRK.

The Great Powers

Key points:

- **Approach**: Bush prioritised relations with the Great Powers but did not avoid confrontation.
- **Russia**: Uneven record, excellent relations after 9/11 but deep disagreement over Georgia and Ukraine.
- **China**: Tensions over Taiwan replaced by the policy of maintaining the *status quo*, good co-operation over North Korea.
- **India**: Possible emergence of closer strategic links.

173. Marcin Zaborowski, 'North Korea goes nuclear: global reactions and the EU', *EUISS Analysis*, October 2006. Available at: http://www.iss.europa.eu.

Bush's team stressed the importance of relations with the Great Powers during the 2000 campaign. In her *Foreign Policy* article, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest', Condoleezza Rice argued that Russia and China need to be confronted when their policies clash with those of the US – but also that the new American foreign policy should prioritise dealing with these powers.[174] Rice also argued in favour of establishing closer relations with India, an emerging power and a democracy.

Bush has indeed been consistent in prioritising relations with Great Powers but not always to a positive effect. In the first months of the presidency there were some tensions in relations with China over the Taiwan issue, but Bush seemed to be on good terms with Russian President Putin from the very beginning (famously declaring that he 'got the sense of Putin's soul'). Following 9/11 America's relations with China and Russia became closer, with both nations considered allies in the war on terror. This was reflected in the 2002 National Security Strategy that spoke about a grand realignment and the era of new relations between great powers.[175] US-Russia cooperation during the war in Afghanistan was very good, with Moscow providing the US with vital intelligence and accepting US military bases in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

In the subsequent few years, however, US-Russia relations soured over NATO enlargement and the plan to locate parts of the US missile defence shield in the Czech Republic and Poland. But the biggest disagreements occurred over America's role in supporting the so-called 'coloured revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine. US support for pro-western movements there was perceived in Russia as directly infringing on Moscow's core interests, including its possible implications for Russia's domestic affairs. Still, even as late as summer 2008 Condoleezza Rice argued that US-Russia relations were better than ever before and that there existed a strategic understanding between the two nations.[176]

The August 2008 Russian-Georgian war made it clear that Rice was mistaken.

As argued by Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, Washington came to perceive Russia's action as an attempt to reverse the *status quo* established in the 1990s and to retain the ex-Soviet sphere of influence. This, in the words of Gates, would be resisted by the US and would call into question the entire basis of post-Cold War US-Russia relations.[177] Far from achieving 'strategic understanding',

174. See: http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20000101faessay5/condoleezza-rice/campaign-2000-promoting-the-national-interest.html.

175. See: http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf.

176. Condoleezza Rice, 'The New American Realism', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2008.

177. 'Defense Secretary, General Brief on Georgia at the Pentagon: U.S.-Russian relations could be affected if Russia does not step back', 15 August 2008. See: http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/August/20080815100912eaifas0.8629267.html?CP.rss=true.

towards the end of Bush's presidency US-Russia relations were rather returning to the kind of geopolitical rivalry experienced during the Cold War.

In contrast to America's relations with Russia, its relations with China improved towards the end of Bush's presidency. Bush toned down his rhetoric on Taiwan and his Administration worked hard at preventing the island from declaring independence. US-Chinese cooperation over North Korea's nuclear ambitions has also been seen as constructive in Washington. Unlike many other western leaders Bush was quite restrained in criticising China over Tibet and he attended the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.

The Administration has made an exceptional effort to engage in closer relations with India and to establish a bilateral alliance with Delhi. Most importantly, the US has signed a nuclear deal that practically exempts Delhi from many NPT obligations whilst accommodating a transfer of civilian nuclear technology to India. The deal was first stalled in India because of internal divisions there and it is still awaiting the approval of the US Congress, but its pursuit demonstrated that the Bush Administration was deeply interested in reaching a strategic understanding with Delhi.

Transatlantic relations

Key points:

- Bush's unilateralism antagonised the Europeans even before Iraq.
- Iraq resulted in a transatlantic split that has not been repaired.
- *Rapprochement* during Bush's second term remained shallow.

Undeniably, Bush's presidency has been detrimental to transatlantic relations. He got off to a bad start by withdrawing the US's signature from the Kyoto Protocol and other multilateral agreements and things have only gone from bad to worse since. To put things bluntly, Bush never had much interest in Europe and the Europeans never liked him. But the worsening of transatlantic relations cannot just be explained by the bad chemistry between the US Administration and the Europeans. This happened before,

for example during the Reagan Administration, but it did not produce anything nearly as serious as the rift in recent years. Clearly, the fallout over the war in Iraq is at the root of the estrangement. While some European governments fell in behind Bush and supported the US policy, European public opinion was united in its opposition to the war. For many young and politically active Europeans, their opposition to the war and Bush's policy constituted their formative experience of politics. Had it not been for the war in Iraq many of these young Europeans would have been naturally pro-American.

In Bush's second term Washington made efforts to recover some of the lost trust. Bush travelled several times to Europe and became the first US president to officially visit the European Union. It was during his presidency that the US relented on the bulk of its objections regarding ESDP, which is no longer seen in Washington (apart from in some conservative circles) as a threat to NATO and transatlantic relations more broadly. Washington came to support EU-3 negotiations with the Iranians and in most areas the EU's and US's foreign policy agendas have been congruent and mutually supportive. The political changes in Europe during Bush's second term – the departure of the French President Chirac and Chancellor Schroder of Germany – have also contributed to the improved climate in transatlantic relations. However, while there certainly has been a *rapprochement* in official relations between the US and the European capitals, there has been little change on the level of public opinion in Europe which remains overwhelmingly sceptical of the current US Administration.[178] This is unlikely to change before Bush's departure.

The next foreign policy

The world is expecting much from America's next president. Barack Obama or John McCain will be asked to meet some steep expectations, in a political and economic climate that is far from favourable for the US. Will the next president reinstate America's position as the global leader? How will the new president address the crucial aspects of the legacy that George W. Bush will be leaving behind? There is no doubt that the world views of Barack Obama and John McCain are underpinned by a clear ideological divide, which is also apparent in their campaigns. Obama's foreign policy

178. See: http://www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/.

message focuses on the collapse of America's prestige, the difficulties of dealing with Iraq and the need to prioritise Afghanistan. McCain addresses these issues by engaging in bellicose rhetoric and talking about the struggle against what he calls 'radical islamist extremists'. In McCain's perspective the setbacks experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan are regrettable but they are necessary costs of keeping America secure.

However, this ideological gap between the candidates is not necessarily always reflected in their policy proposals, where, despite the persistence of some major differences, a growing degree of convergence has also been emerging. Below is a snapshot view of the candidates' positions on major policy areas.

Iraq and Afghanistan

Key points:

- **Afghanistan**: the future President will maintain and potentially increase US presence there. US operations on the Pakistani side of the border possible.
- **Iraq**: Combat troops remain at least until 2010, possibly longer. Regardless of the elections, the US would leave behind a residual force to fight al-Qaeda and train the Iraqi Army.

In his campaign Obama has underlined the urgency and necessity of dealing with Afghanistan, which, he has argued, is the central front in the fight against al-Qaeda. According to Obama, Bush made a mistake in neglecting Afghanistan and rushing to war with Saddam's Iraq, where al-Qaeda did not exist before the invasion. What the US needs to do is to refocus its attention on Afghanistan, where it must invest more troops and pursue an aggressive campaign, including a possibility of US troops attacking targets on the Pakistani side of the border.[179] None of that, however, would be possible unless US troops are withdrawn from Iraq. Hence, according to Obama's campaign platform, all US combat troops should be pulled out from Iraq within sixteen months of him assuming office, at the rate of one to two brigades a month.[180]

John McCain has put forward similar arguments about Afghanistan, calling for a stronger allied presence and even for

179. See: http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post_group/ObamaHQ/CpHR.

180. Barack Obama, 'Renewing American leadership', *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2007.

permanent US military bases there. However, Obama and McCain fundamentally differ on their view of the war in Iraq and their prescription for ending it. Unlike Obama, for McCain Iraq, just like Afghanistan, is another front in the war against radical extremism. According to McCain, a failure in Iraq would be a victory for al-Qaeda. Hence the US cannot pull out before stabilising Iraq. In fact, McCain has argued that the US should stay in Iraq as long as necessary, even if that means for one hundred years.[181]

The differences over Iraq have been highlighted in the campaigns and are, in many respects, the reasons why both candidates won the nominations. Obama was the only heavyweight Democrat contender who opposed the war from the beginning, which was a major asset in his rivalry against Hillary Clinton who voted in favour of the war in 2002. McCain, on the other hand, has been an unwavering supporter of intervening in Iraq, supporting Bush over the decision to stay there but criticising the President for not investing enough troops in Iraq. The success of the 'surge' policy appeared to the Republicans as a vindication of McCain's hard line.

With one nominee wanting to pull out of Iraq as soon as possible and another one wanting to maintain or even potentially increase the US military presence there, it would seem that there is little room for convergence between these two views. This is still the case. However, it has also become clear that since securing their nominations, both McCain and Obama have moderated their views on Iraq. McCain has considerably revised his one hundred year timeframe of commitment in Iraq when he suggested that he expects that the situation will improve to the point that would enable the US to leave around 2013.[182] At the same time, Obama has softened his commitment to pulling out most troops within sixteen months by stating that, whilst this timeframe remained his target, he would seek the advice of General Petraeus and other commanders on the ground when deciding on the matter and that he is in the process of 'refining' his Iraq policy . Obama has also maintained that in any case he would leave a considerable force (around 60,000) to train the Iraqi army and fight al-Qaeda for as long as needed.[183] However, following his July 2008 trip to Iraq, Obama reaffirmed his sixteen-month pullout timetable, which was also all but openly endorsed by Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Obama's and McCain's stances on Iraq may be very different for ideological reasons but their actual policies may not diverge so

181. See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFknKVjuyNk.

182. See: http://blog.washingtonpost.com/the-trail/2008/07/08/mccain_responds_to_malikis_cal.html.

183. Obama, op. cit. in note 180.

dramatically, not least because the current Administration and the Iraqi government may reach an agreement that would set the pullout timetable for 2011.[184]

Iran

Key points:

- Obama would unconditionally negotiate with Iran, McCain would not.
- Both candidates keep the use of force on the table.
- Pursuit of harsher sanctions likely, regardless of who wins the elections.

Next to Iraq, Iran represents the issue where there is a clear ideological gap between the candidates. Again, McCain has been quite hawkish here, especially when he chose to sing 'bomb, bomb Iran' to the tune of the Beach Boys on the campaign trail. Obama, at the same time, argued that as president he would talk to Iran with no preconditions. This difference of views over Iran is in reality an upshot of the Iraq debate. On the one hand McCain regards Iran as a possible villain in the fight with radical extremism – his campaign routinely accuses Iran of supporting and financing terrorists and insurgents in Iraq and of course in Lebanon and Gaza. On the other hand, for Obama Iraq represents a lesson in how *not* to conduct foreign policy in the region, especially with respect to Iran. There is also a classical hawk-dove divide here, with McCain relying on military threats and Obama on the diplomatic instruments first.

However, in this case the gap between the two candidates is actually not that large and in actual policy prescription it could be still smaller. While Obama offered talks with the Iranians, he never ruled out the use of force as demonstrated in his speech to the pro-Israel AIPEC in which he argued: 'I will do everything in my power to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon; everything in my power; *everything*'.[185] Obama also contended that 'Iran is the greatest threat to us all', which suggests that he is certainly prepared to consider military action. Equally, there is almost no difference between the candidates regarding harsher sanctions against Tehran, including secondary sanctions that the Europeans oppose.

184. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article4288108.ece; 'Leave as soon as you sensibly can', *The Economist*, 30 August-5 September 2008.

185. See: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91150432.

Great Powers

Key points:

- **Russia**: McCain in favour of missile defence in Central Europe, Obama sceptical about the project. Both in favour of NATO enlargement to Georgia and Ukraine.
- **China**: Minor differences, both candidates highlight concerns.
- **India**: Both candidates share an optimistic outlook, in favour of India's UNSC seat and (McCain) G8 membership.

McCain is unusually hawkish towards Russia, in fact, to a much greater extent than President Bush. He famously declared that when he looked into Putin's eyes he did not get the sense of the Russian President's soul (which was what Bush once apparently saw) but he 'saw three letters: a K, a G and a B'.[186] In his *Foreign Affairs* article, McCain called for a new approach to what he called a 'revanchist' Russia, argued in favour of Russian exclusion from the G-8, and said that the West should send a message to Russia that NATO 'is indivisible and that the organization's doors remain open to all democracies committed to the defense of freedom.'[187] The Russian intervention in Georgia in August 2008 gave McCain an opportunity to claim that he was proven right. During the crisis he adopted a decidedly 'hawkish' tone, calling for western solidarity in the face of a resurgent Russia and arguing that 'we are all Georgians'.[188]

For Obama the Cold War did not constitute a formative experience. He has no emotional or personal agenda in approaching Russia, which he described as 'neither our enemy nor close ally'.[189] Obama's initial response to the Georgian crisis was conciliatory but as Russia moved its troops deeper into Georgian territory Obama's criticism of Moscow sharpened and he raised the possibility of blocking Moscow's application to join the WTO as well as hinting at the prospect of a possible boycott of the 2014 Winter Olympics to be held in Sochi. Like McCain, Obama has also made it clear that he considers the crisis a 'turning point' in Russia's relations with the West.[190] Obama also joined McCain in calling for NATO to offer its Membership Action Plan to Georgia and Ukraine at the Alliance's summit in December 2008.

186. See: http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2007/12/mccain_man_of_the_year_should.asp.

187. See: http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20071101faessay86602-p0/john-mccain/an-enduring-peace-built-on-freedom.html.

188. John McCain, 'We are all Georgians', *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 August 2008.

189. See: http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/dynamic_page.php?id=64.

190. See: http://www.barackobama.com/2008/08/11/statement_of_senator_barack_ob_22.php.

The clearest difference between the Republican and the Democrat contenders in this regard concerns the plan to locate parts of the US's missile defence shield in Central Europe, in Poland and in the Czech Republic, to which Russia is opposed. McCain is a strong supporter of the programme and he made it clear, during the presidential debate in October 2007, that he did not 'care what Putin thinks about America's missile defense'. In contrast, Obama expressed his reservations about the plan, although he did not mention Russia as the reason for his objections. Following the Georgia crisis, Poland and the US concluded the deal for locating the system's interceptors in Poland. It is not yet clear if the Georgian war changed Obama's perspective on the desirability of missile defence or more specifically on locating it in Central Europe, but the fact that the deal has already been reached probably means that, if elected, Obama would not discontinue it.

On China, there seems to be little difference between the nominees. Both McCain and Obama argue that China is a competitor and both have highlighted various concerns for the US. Reflecting their parties' broader platforms, McCain accentuates security issues and speaks in favour of a 'China hedging' policy whilst Obama concentrates on economic concerns. Both nominees have criticised China's human rights record, especially in the context of Tibet, and both suggested that they would not have attended the Beijing Olympics. The only potentially meaningful distinction between the candidates occurred in respect of the handling of North Korea. Both of them argue in favour of maintaining the Six-Party Talks format but Obama also alluded to the possibility of bilateral talks, which McCain rejects.[191]

While both candidates argue that there are some concerns regarding relations with China, which, incidentally, is the usual position of presidential hopefuls, they also agree that relations with another emerging power – India – offer many opportunities. Both McCain and Obama voted in favour of the United States-India Energy Security Cooperation Act of 2006. During the campaign Obama argued that he would build a 'close strategic partnership' with India if he is elected president whilst McCain said that India could become one of the 'natural allies' of the United States.[192] McCain has also argued in favour of including India in the G-8 and both McCain and Obama would like to see India have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.[193]

191. See: http://www.cnbc.com/id/25392717/for/cnbc.

192. See: http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?sectionName=&id=1f397f9a-20b8-4c0a-91fa-dac1a1fb7634&&Headline=Obama+for+'close+ties'+with+India+&strParent=strParentID.

193. See: http://www.cfr.org/publication/15834/.

Transatlantic relations

Regardless of who wins the elections, transatlantic relations are likely to improve, although overly high expectations should be avoided. Both Obama and McCain want to close the notorious prison camp in Guantanamo, which operates outside the boundaries of international law and the existence of which has been condemned by the Europeans. Both candidates pay attention to global warming and want to deal with it by introducing a cap-and-trade system and legislation that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Perhaps most importantly, both candidates have made considerable effort to send signals to the Europeans that they would break with the style and practice of Bush's transatlantic policy. This has of course been easier for Obama, whose consistent opposition to Bush's foreign policy was one of the key factors behind his victory in the Democratic primary. But John McCain also made it clear that he would be more of a multilateralist than Bush and that he would listen to the Europeans and be open to persuasion.[194]

As throughout the world, Barack Obama is hugely popular with Europeans and there is no doubt that the vast majority of Europeans would prefer to see him elected next president. McCain, on the other hand, has greater experience of and empathy with Europe. He represents the Cold War generation that instinctively looks to Europe first. However, his reputation in Europe is tainted by his support for the deeply unpopular war in Iraq, which means that for many Europeans he represents a continuation of Bush's policy.

Obama and McCain are likely to pursue quite different approaches towards the EU and individual partners in Europe. Although Obama has served as a chairman of the European Affairs Subcommittee in the Senate he did not travel to Europe from the time he assumed this position in 2007 until July 2008 (after winning the nomination) and he has not pursued any major activity in this role.[195] In his campaign pronouncements Obama has referred to NATO and the three biggest European states – France and Germany and the UK – but he has rarely mentioned the EU. Obama himself and the members of his campaign team have made it clear that they expect a much larger European contribution to NATO's operation in Afghanistan and the lifting of the restrictive caveats operated, among others, by Germany, Italy and Spain.[196]

194. See: http://www.cfr.org/publication/15755/mccains_oped_on_the_us_and_europe.html?breadcrumb=%2Fbios%2F662%2Fjohn_mccain.

195. See: http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,druck-560595,00.html.

196. See: http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Obama_Transatlantic_Relations.pdf.

McCain, on the other hand, has probably the longest record of engagement in European affairs of any presidential candidate in post-war history. He was one of the founders of the annual Munich Conference on Security Policy and has been a regular guest there since the 1970s. McCain has visited every single NATO member state and he has developed personal relations with a number of European leaders. McCain is a strong supporter of NATO but he also argues in favour of a strong European Union and he endorsed the further development of the European Security and Defence Policy.[197] McCain does not seem to prioritise the bigger EU Member States and while he visited France and the UK during his trip to Europe in March 2008, he also held meetings with other European leaders.[198]

Transatlantic relations, however, go well beyond the question of direct US-European relations and they also concern all manner of global issues, which makes the whole picture much more unpredictable. It is impossible, for example, to separate the transatlantic relationship from US and EU policies in Iraq, Iran and Russia. In all these cases there are just too many factors at play to make any reasonable predictions as to how transatlantic relations will evolve under the new presidency. For example, Obama's early opposition to the war in Iraq is certainly more in tune with European sentiments on the matter than McCain's hawkishness. But Obama's idea to pull out the combat troops from Iraq within sixteen months, regardless of the conditions on the ground, is not necessarily greeted with enthusiasm in Europe. After all, Iraq is in close proximity to Europe and it is a direct neighbour of Turkey, which is still in the process of trying to negotiate EU membership.

Obama's offer to talk to Iran unconditionally is overall welcomed in Europe while McCain's hard line is often seen as reckless. The candidates' approaches to Russia split the Europeans, depending on their proximity to (and historical relationship with) Russia. But, as argued earlier, in all these policy areas the next American foreign policy may not be what the candidates currently say it will be. Perhaps a better indication of the form that the next American foreign policy is likely to take can be gauged from taking a closer look at the candidates' respective ideologies.

197. See: http://www.cfr.org/publication/15755/mccains_oped_on_the_us_and_europe.html?breadcrumb=%2Fbios%2F662%2Fjohn_mccain.

198. See: http://thepage.time.com/2008/07/08/mccain-meets-with-polish-foreign-minister/.

Bush's legacy and foreign policy ideologies

As argued earlier, Bush is leaving behind a considerable ideological legacy.

He reinvented American nationalism with its practical applications being the pursuit of unilateralism and assertiveness in relations with the Great Powers. Bush arrived in office determined to strengthen America's self-sufficiency through building the missile defence system. Finally, the outgoing president reacted to 9/11 by watering down some civil liberties and pursuing the doctrine of pre-emption. No matter how much John McCain and Barack Obama may want to distance themselves from George W. Bush, if elected they are likely to maintain at least some aspects of his legacy.

Multilateralism

Neither McCain orObama are likely to be as unilateral as Bush (certainly not in the case of Obama), who seemed to cherish the lone pursuit of international affairs. But neither of them also are like to apply multilateralism out of any other than pragmatic considerations. Both candidates are likely to push through new disarmament agreements with Russia (McCain with more reservations than Obama) and re-submit to Congress the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) for ratification.[199] Both Obama and McCain have suggested that they would like to adopt a post-Kyoto agreement on climate change. But neither candidate would or even could (because of Congress's likely objection) sign a climate-change agreement that would exempt India and China from compulsory caps on emissions.

It is in the area of Obama's and McCain's attitudes towards global governance and the United Nations that perhaps the starkest differences between them are highlighted. Both candidates have been critical of the UN (for example citing the UN's inability to act on Darfur) but they arrive at different prescriptions. Obama argues in favour of the US's re-engagement with the UN whilst McCain suggests looking for alternative frameworks where multilateral consensus could be reached. In this context McCain proposed setting up a new organisation, called the League of Democracies, that could act where the UN failed to do so. For example, he named Darfur, Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe as the areas where the

199. Calin Trenkov-Wermuth, 'US nuclear strategy after the 2008 presidential elections', *EUISS Analysis*, August 2008. Available at: http://iss.europa.eu.

League could take action – such as imposing sanctions – in the absence of a UN consensus.[200]

Both candidates have stressed repeatedly that they would not make US foreign policy dependent on international bodies and would act unilaterally if the national interest so required. This, in fact, is an old dogma of US foreign policy that has been around for a long time before Bush came on the scene, but which has been emphasised by the current president. The fact that Obama and McCain have to remind the public that this basic axiom of US foreign policy would remain unchanged suggests that Bush's presidency has had a certain impact on the level of the public discourse on the issue.

Self-sufficiency and missile defence

Self-sufficiency and the country's isolation from the 'dangerous world' by two oceans has always formed a part of the national appeal in America. In the twenty-first century physical isolation matters less but the appeal of keeping the homeland distant and safe from external aggression remains very much alive. In this context, the planned national missile defence (NMD) system is portrayed by security hawks as a replacement for the diminishing safety afforded by America's geographical isolation.

The development of an NMD system was one of the central tenets of Bush's 2000 campaign and it represented an essential part of his appeal to American nationalism. Once elected president, Bush withdrew the US from the ABM treaty, which prohibited the development of missile defence, and he boosted the project's funding. Had it not been for 9/11, the NMD would have been Bush's central security project. Clearly, with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Administration had to change its priorities. Still, Bush has considerably advanced the project, possibly even to the point of irreversibility.

In April 2008 the NMD received the blessing of the NATO countries at the Alliance's summit in Bucharest.[201] In July 2008 the US signed a deal for locating the system's radar in the Czech Republic, and in August with Poland.

The missile defence project, first put forward by the Reagan Administration, has long divided Republicans and Democrats. When it was first introduced, in 1983, under the label of the Strategic Defence Initiative (also known as 'Star Wars') it encountered

200. Asle Toje, 'Rethinking the League of Democracies', *EUISS Opinion*, May 2008; see http://www.iss.europa.eu/index.php?id=18&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1061&tx_ttnews[backPid]=131&cHash=4c7893f207.

201. See: http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html.

stiff opposition from the Democrats in Congress. However in subsequent years, the aims of the programme changed – from providing defence against the Soviet Union to defence against nuclear terrorism and rogue states, and the Democrats' opposition to it has progressively weakened. President Clinton, for example, did not question the principle of the programme although he failed to provide it with sufficient resources and delayed the decision on its implementation until he left office.[202]

As outlined above, McCain fully supports the deployment of NMD whilst Barack Obama has raised some reservations.[203] Still, if Obama becomes president he would not abandon the programme although he would slow down its actual implementation. On the other hand, a President McCain would be even more committed and more likely to advance the programme than the current Bush Administration. It was significant, for example, that early on McCain endorsed the Polish demand (recently accepted by the Administration) to permanently station Patriot air defence missiles in Poland in return for its agreement to host the interceptors.[204] However, despite these differences, the candidates are in agreement that NMD is indeed desirable and beneficial for US security. The principle of advancing America's self-sufficiency, of which Bush was a strong advocate, is therefore no longer challenged.

Pre-emption and prevention

Bush's doctrine of pre-emption is confusing, especially since its only application – the war in Iraq – was not pre-emptive. The practice of pre-empting a clear and immediate danger by initiating hostilities is not new and is normally considered a legitimate defence. For example, Great Britain's entry into the First and Second World Wars was pre-emptive. Clearly no such situation existed in Iraq, which was effectively contained and did not represent a danger to the US or even its immediate neighbours. The war in Iraq could be at best portrayed as 'preventive' rather than 'pre-emptive', the former categorisation implying a more remote possibility of a potential threat or hostility.

Due to its geographical location America has fought very few defensive wars, the exceptions being the wars of independence and, to a lesser extent, its entry into the Second World War. Otherwise, a majority of American wars were either pre-emptive or pre-

202. 'Clinton delays missile decision', *BBC News*, 2 September 2000.

203. See: http://www.johnmccain.com/informing/issues/054184f4-6b51-40dd-8964-54fcf66a1e68.htm; http://obama.senate.gov/press/070716-obama_statement_73/.

204. See: http://www.pb.pl/Default2.aspx?ArticleID=c50ff1e8-9386-4425-bd14-684d8b7c86bb&ref=lastadd.

ventive, although some of them were also purely expansionist, such as the wars with Mexico (1846-48) and Spain (1898). There is therefore nothing new or shocking in the essence of the doctrine of pre-emption as it was formulated in the 2002 National Security Strategy. What was however shocking was the fact that the administration portrayed the Iraq war as pre-emptive – linking the Saddam regime to 9/11 and citing its intention to use its alleged WMD – when it clearly was not the case. What was also shocking was the inept conduct of this war.

Bush has given pre-emption a bad name, but there is little doubt that America will be acting both pre-emptively and preventively in the future. For example, bothMcCain and Obama have warned Iran that they are prepared to use force against it in the event that its intentions towards Israel become clearly belligerent and/or they obtain evidence that Iran is close to acquiring a nuclear weapon. McCain's bellicose rhetoric *vis-à-vis* Iran is perhaps more credible than Obama's expressions of firmness but this has little to do with their different interpretations of the value of pre-emption. After all it was Obama, not McCain, who argued in favour of conducting offensive operations against al-Qaeda hideouts on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border without seeking Islamabad's permission.

Bush's 2002 pre-emption doctrine is likely to be reformulated and become conceptually tighter, but no future president, whether Democrat or Republican, is likely to discard it.

America's next foreign policy: implications for Europe

America and the world are in a different place at the end of Bush's presidency than where they were at its beginning. In the meantime the position of the EU has also changed. Whether the EU and the US get on with each other or not, the fact of the matter is that their combined influence on the world has diminished in the last eight years. It is more obvious now than at any time since the end of the Cold War that both sides of the Atlantic need each other in order to preserve their influence in global affairs. America's next president, whether it is John McCain or Barack Obama, will be welcomed in Europe, not least because transatlantic relations deteriorated sharply during the Bush presidency and the Europeans are in general hopeful about the upcoming change in Washington.

However, European expectations of the post-Bush era are not

always realistic. As argued here, regardless of who wins the elections there will be a considerable element of continuity in America's foreign policy. Obama and McCain differ, of course, in their foreign policy style and in their perception of the outside world. Obama, with his Kenyan roots and personal experience of Indonesia, has greater empathy with the third world and a generally more optimistic attitude. McCain, on the other hand, tends to apply the Cold War perspective (having himself been a prisoner of war in Vietnam) and concentrates on the threats to US security.

Still, the bottom line is that ultimately both candidates will always put the security of the United States and the preservation of its primacy first. Gripped by Obamamania, Europe tends to see the Democratic candidate as a left-wing liberal who would reverse Bush's foreign policy. In fact, by European standards Barack Obama would be considered centre-right and his foreign policy would be seen as assertive if not nationalistic. At the same time, while it is true that John McCain has more empathy with Europe than George W. Bush, his foreign policy may actually prove to be more hawkish than that of the current president.

The next president will have expectations *vis-à-vis* the Europeans too and the state of US-EU relations will to a considerable extent depend on the EU's ability and willingness to meet these expectations. Below are the five key areas in which the next president is likely to solicit collaboration from European leaders:

1) **Afghanistan**: As already indicated by both candidates, if elected they will ask the Europeans to increase their presence in Afghanistan and boost their contributions to the country's reconstruction and development. For Barack Obama Afghanistan represents a 'central front in the fight against terror' and he has already promised to increase the US's military presence there by at least two brigades. A similar promise was made by John McCain.

   It is unlikely that EU Member States would be able to increase their current contributions to ISAF, not least because of the continuing opposition from public opinion. But a greater European contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction and development, for example by setting up EU Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), would be more plausible.

2) **Iraq**: Although Obama and McCain have very different policies on Iraq, the reality on the ground, the improved security situation and the agreement negotiated by Bush and Prime Minister

al-Maliki is likely to mean that the American combat troops will be pulled out by 2011, irrespective of who wins the elections. This timetable is likely to be aspirational, meaning it may change should the situation in Iraq dramatically deteriorate. However, for the time being it is the most likely outcome of the US-Iraqi negotiations.

A more secure environment in Iraq will open up the possibility for greater European involvement there. This would also be much welcomed by Washington.

3) **The Israeli-Palestinian conflict**: Despite the attention that the Bush Administration has focused on the conflict in its last year in office, little, if any, progress has been made in fostering peace in the Middle East and the prospect of a comprehensive deal being reached before Bush leaves office is minimal. There is no indication that McCain's policy would differ significantly in this area from Bush's. Obama has also gone out of his way to reassure Israel and Jewish voters in America that he would continue prioritising the security of Israel. Still, a distinction between the nominees is that Obama has promised to throw his weight behind the peace process from day one of his presidency. However, in reality, the transition period in the US will mean that a new team would not be able to focus on the issue until March or April 2009. A lack of international supervision could endanger the nascent Syrian-Israeli process and the progress achieved in talks between Israel's outgoing Prime Minister Olmert and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. This potentially creates an opportunity for the EU to step in and replace the role played by the US, at least during the transition period. For example, as argued by Volker Perthes, the EU and the US should agree to nominate Javier Solana as a temporary mediator for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations from the end of 2008.[205] In the subsequent period, should the peace process be reinvigorated by America's strong engagement, the EU would clearly need to contribute to it, not least by providing economic incentives and strengthening Palestinian capacity and propensity to negotiate. This may include reaching out to all actors in the Palestinian political sphere.
4) **Iran**: Both nominees are in favour of stronger sanctions against Iran. Since the US does not have meaningful economic relations with Iran its call for sanctions mainly has an impact on other powers and especially the EU. Should there be no agreement in

205. Volker Perthes, 'Europe into the breach', *International Herald Tribune*, 26 August 2008.

the UN on the sanctions regime, the EU would find itself under pressure to join the US in pursuing a sanctions regime outside the UN framework. In the event of an Obama victory, the EU would need to adapt to a situation where the US would be fully engaged in the negotiating process.

5) **Russia**: Following the Georgian-Russian war US-Russia relations have turned more acrimonious. McCain has been decidedly more hawkish towards Russia than Obama but they both have argued in favour of opening NATO to Georgia and Ukraine. Those European states that opposed NATO enlargement will find themselves under increasing pressure from Washington to change their positions. Although Obama has expressed some scepticism about Missile Defence, the deal concluded by the Bush Administration and Poland during the Georgian crisis is unlikely to be rescinded by a Democratic Administration. The overall approach of the future US Administration towards Russia is likely to be more assertive than the approach of the EU.

American expectations *vis-à-vis* Europe are either already defined or predictable. The same is not necessarily true the other way around. Of course, the Europeans have some very grand expectations of the next president, but, as has been argued here, these are not always realistic. Perhaps it is time for the EU to form some specific policy ideas so as to be ready to engage in a dynamic and constructive way with the new Administration. After all, both Barack Obama and John McCain have argued that they are prepared to listen and be persuaded by America's allies.

Abbreviations

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
AIPEC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU-3	Britain, France and Germany (negotiating with Iran on behalf of the EU).
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOP	Grand Old Party (The Republican Party)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICC	International Criminal Court
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ISG	Iraq Study Group
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NMD	National Missile Defence
NCR	National Council of Resistance
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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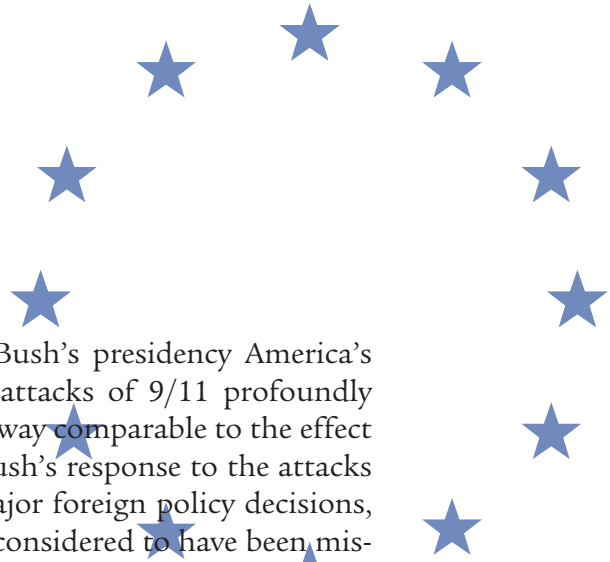

During the eight years of George W. Bush's presidency America's grand strategy changed. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 profoundly altered America's view of the world in a way comparable to the effect of Pearl Harbour. But the manner of Bush's response to the attacks is the subject of controversy and his major foreign policy decisions, especially the invasion of Iraq, are now considered to have been mistaken by the majority of Americans. However, regardless of whether Bush will be ultimately judged a failure or not, it is likely that some of the main policies associated with his name will be pursued by his successor, irrespective of whether the next incumbent in the White House is a Democrat or a Republican.

The end of the Bush era creates an opportunity for a new departure and a renewed dialogue between the EU and the US. This will not happen if the incoming American Administration chooses not to accept that it must talk to and sometimes be prepared to listen to the Europeans. Of course, Europe must also be open to engaging constructively with the new Administration.

The purpose of this *Chaillot Paper* is to give an account of Bush's legacy and its impact on the next US Administration's conduct of foreign policy. To this end, it examines the ideology and policies that have characterised Bush's Administration and maps out the likely future orientation of America's foreign policy.

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