

The Bush Administration's Legacy

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What will be the legacy of the Bush administration? That is a question that will surely occupy historians for decades to come, and it will likely be the topic of many doctoral dissertations—some of which I imagine I will even supervise upon returning to Stanford on January 20, 2009. Still, we can say a few things about this question now.

This is an administration that had the challenge of serving at one of the most transformational times in recent memory. It is a time that has seen the tectonic plates of the international system shift considerably. It is a time that has seen many nations at once rising to new positions of global power and influence, especially in Asia. It is a time in which the old order in the Middle East has come apart and a different, better set of bargains is being slowly but surely put in place. And it is a time that saw the most horrific attack on the American homeland in our nation's history—an instance of strategic surprise in which our administration was compelled to rethink what constituted challenge and what might emerge as opportunity.

These are sweeping, historical challenges, and securing the United States and furthering our global leadership in this rapidly changing world will be the work of a generation. Success will require the concerted effort of many administrations, but I am confident that *our* administration has laid a foundation upon which future US leaders, both Republican and Democratic, will be able to work over time to support the growth of an international order that protects our interests and reflects our values.

This international order must rest, as all others before it have, on a base of constructive relationships between powerful and influential states—states with which we can work in concert to solve common global problems—and our administration has made a significant contribution to that effort.

We have begun to transform the transatlantic alliance. Twelve of the 28 NATO allies are now former captive nations, which is changing the character of the alliance. We also have expanded our alliance's mission to not only secure and strengthen a Europe whole, free, and at peace, but also to promote our shared ideals in places as different as Georgia, Sudan, Iraq, and perhaps most significantly, Afghanistan.

We have begun to transform our traditional alliances with democratic powers in Asia like Japan, South Korea, and Australia—making our partnerships platforms not only for our common regional defense, but also for tackling the global challenges of the 21st century: expanding trade and development, fighting terrorism and proliferation, fostering energy security, stemming climate change, and defending freedom and democracy.

We have begun to transform our relationships with large, multiethnic democracies like Brazil and India—encouraging these emerging partners’ rise to global power and influence, but also to take on new responsibilities for securing and strengthening the international order that benefits us all. With India, in particular, the Civil-Nuclear Agreement can unlock the great and long unfulfilled potential of the US-India global partnership.

We have recast our relationships in Africa and the Americas to further the democratic development of those regions. In the Western Hemisphere, we have supported responsible leaders of the left and right and promoted a positive hemispheric agenda of personal security, good governance, free and fair trade, and social justice. And in Africa, we have supported the new African agenda for progress: ending conflicts, reducing poverty, fighting disease and corruption, and consolidating democratic institutions.

At the same time, we have led an unprecedented expansion and strengthening of our relationship with China. We have encouraged Beijing to meet the international obligations that come with rising power—furthering trade and responsible development practices, addressing energy and environmental challenges, and combating global threats like proliferation. To be sure, serious differences remain between our governments. But our administration has used our improving relationship with China to address issues of concern, such as China’s non-transparent military modernization and its support for irresponsible states like Sudan, Burma and Zimbabwe.

We also have worked to build a constructive relationship with Russia. This goal has been tested by an emerging pattern of irresponsible and destabilizing behavior by Russia’s leaders, most recently their invasion of Georgia. In response, the United States has helped to rally the world, especially our transatlantic allies, to stand firm and to work together to ensure that Russia’s aggression will achieve no enduring strategic objective—in Georgia, or anywhere else. And we have largely been successful in that effort. Georgia’s democracy will survive. Its economy will be rebuilt. And its independence and sovereignty will be reinforced.

In response to irresponsible Russian behavior, like the attack on Georgia, the United States, along with our friends and allies, has sought to impress upon Russia that it depends upon the world for its success, and it therefore cannot have it both ways—drawing benefits from the international order while destabilizing its very foundations. A 21st century Russia and a 19th century Russia cannot operate side by side. At the same time, we and our friends and allies have recognized the need to continue working with Russia, where possible, to secure and advance our shared interests. The Sochi Declaration, which President Bush and then-President Putin signed in April 2008, provides a framework for our cooperation. This effort to balance elements of cooperation and competition in our relationship with Russia is the correct strategic approach, now and in the years ahead.

Whether with Russia, China, India, Japan, or our European allies, we have not only sought to build constructive relationships with powerful states; we have sought to put them to work to address common problems. One example is North Korea. We have brought

together key stakeholders in the Six Party framework, especially China, with which we have worked closely and constructively on a matter of common concern in ways that would have been inconceivable merely several years ago. In the Six Party framework, we have offered incentives and disincentives to shape North Korea's behavior. And we have reached a diplomatic agreement to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons and to resolve long-standing political, economic, and security issues on the peninsula. Implementing this agreement is ongoing and will remain a tough and painstaking effort.

Similarly, with the threat of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, our administration has laid a foundation for success. We have assembled the necessary and appropriate international partners, especially the P5+1. We have presented Iran's leaders with a fundamental strategic choice: Change their threatening behavior, and a path of cooperation is open; but persist in destabilizing the region and violating international law, and Iran's isolation will only deepen. To clarify this choice, we and our partners have offered Iran a package of incentives to make better choices and backed it with new tools of pressure—among other things, four Chapter 7 UN Security Council sanctions resolutions, international banking and commercial restrictions, unilateral designations and sanctions, and regional security measures to target Iranian agents, especially those attacking our citizens in Iraq.

With both North Korea and Iran, the changes in regime behavior that our administration has sought are widely supported. The strategies we have created and the coalitions we have built to achieve these goals diplomatically are sound. On both counts, our successor will inherit diplomatic frameworks that need not be wholly reconceived, just adapted and refined as circumstances require. These accomplishments represent a policy foundation upon which future administrations can continue the long, difficult diplomatic work that is necessary to advance our national interests.

Another global challenge for which our administration has rallied our friends and allies and laid a long-term foundation for success is the fight against terrorism and extremism. We have built a coalition of dozens of countries to cooperate through diplomacy, intelligence-sharing, and law enforcement. We have adapted the global posture of American power to target this threat. And we have reformed old domestic institutions and built new ones to prepare the United States for what will be a long war.

But our administration has done something else as well. We have responded to the threat of global terrorism not simply with the sharp end of American power, but by working to support all who are striving to build states that reflect common values: human rights and human dignity, liberty and the rule of law, democratic development and social justice.

The focal point of this effort is and will be, for decades to come, the broader Middle East. For too long, as other regions modernized, reformed, and integrated into the global economy, this region remained stagnant, and it was treated as an exception. No longer. Across the broader Middle East, leaders and citizens are beginning to transform their

countries and realign their region. Not by sect or ethnicity, but by values—working to marginalize those who impose extremism through violence.

This will be a decades-long endeavor, but for reasons of both interest and morality, the United States must support it, and our administration has laid a foundation to do so. We have shifted the posture of American power to support indigenous efforts to transform the broader Middle East.

We have strengthened our ties to our friends of long-standing, such as Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states—not only expanding efforts to provide for our common defense, but using our partnerships to push these governments, for the first time, to make political and economic reforms that are in the long-term interest of their countries and citizens.

We have backed Lebanese patriots in reasserting their nation’s sovereignty and independence, in building and broadening their democratic institutions, and defending against violent extremists at home and abroad.

We and our regional friends and allies have demonstrated to Syria that there is a place for them in the better, more peaceful Middle East that we are building together—if, that is, they are willing to end their support for terrorism and their other destabilizing policies in the region.

We have articulated a vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, and we have forged a comprehensive strategy to realize it. This strategy includes a viable diplomatic process, as laid out in Annapolis, to support the parties—bilaterally, regionally, and internationally—to negotiate and resolve the outstanding issues between them. This strategy also includes an unprecedented international effort to help the Palestinians build their state from the ground up—democratic institutions, a thriving economy, and security forces that have the will and the means to fight terrorism and enforce the law. Here, too, it is unlikely that our administration will see all of our goals realized on our watch, but we will pass to our successor the fundamentals of a strategy for success.

In Afghanistan, the basics of democracy are taking root after nearly three decades of tyranny, violence and war. For the first time in history, Afghans have a government of the people and guided by a constitution that codifies the rights of all citizens. The challenges in Afghanistan do not stem from a strong enemy. The Taliban offers a political vision that very few Afghans embrace. Rather, they exploit the current limitations of the Afghan government, using violence against civilians and revenues from illegal narcotics to impose their rule. Where the Afghan government, with support from the international community, has been able to provide good governance and economic opportunity, the Taliban is in retreat.

We have a vital interest in supporting the emergence of an effective, democratic Afghan state that can defeat the Taliban and deliver “population security”: addressing basic

needs for safety, services, the rule of law, and increased economic opportunity. We share this goal with the Afghan people, who do not want us to leave until our common mission is accomplished. We can succeed in Afghanistan, but we must be prepared to sustain a partnership with that new democracy for many years to come.

Then, of course, there is Iraq. Historians of the future will long discuss and debate the particular decisions made during this historic endeavor, but what I am confident in saying now is that the decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power was right and necessary. We did not take that action to democratize the Middle East. We did so to remove a long-standing threat to international security. We discussed the question of whether we should be satisfied with another strongman ruling Iraq after its liberation. The answer was no, and it was thus avowedly US policy from the outset to try to support the Iraqis in building a democratic state.

In this way, democratization in Iraq was thus linked to the broader fight against terrorism, because our goal after September 11 was to address the deeper malignancies of the Middle East, not just the symptoms of them. It is very hard to imagine how a more just and democratic Middle East could ever have emerged with Saddam still at the center of the region.

Our effort in Iraq has been extremely arduous. Iraq was a broken state and society under Saddam. The explosion to the surface of long-suppressed grievances has challenged fragile, young democratic institutions. But ultimately, there is no other decent and peaceful way for Iraqis to reconcile. Iraq is a microcosm of the Middle East, with its ethnic and sectarian diversity, and the Iraqi people's struggle to build a democracy is thus shifting the landscape not just of Iraq but of the region. Indeed, Iraq is emerging as a normal nation again—one that can increasingly govern, sustain, and defend itself with less US and international support. That is how we define success in Iraq, and I am confident that this process will continue to unfold in the years ahead. That, in turn, will contribute tremendously to regional security and to the safety of the American people.

Though issues like Iraq, North Korea, and the fight against terrorism have attracted the most attention over the past eight years, a critical part of this administration's legacy will be the foundation we have laid to advance our nation's shared vision of a better world—a world of democratic, well-governed states that can respond to the needs of their people, reduce poverty, and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.

To achieve this goal, we have begun to transform the US approach to international development. We have launched the largest international development agenda since the Marshall Plan—including the now \$48 billion effort to combat tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS; doubling foreign assistance for Latin America, tripling it worldwide, and quadrupling it for Africa; providing tens of billions of dollars in debt relief for the poorest countries; and offering billions of dollars in new development grants, under the Millennium Challenge Account initiative, for countries that govern justly, advance economic liberty, and invest in their people. With that program, in particular, we have begun to transform US development assistance into an incentive for states to build the

political and economic institutions that are necessary to reduce poverty and foster sustainable development.

But perhaps one of the most important legacies of this administration will be the foundation we have laid for the transformation of our diplomatic institutions. The State Department has now been designated a national security agency, and we have started it down the path to perform that role.

With the support of Congress, President Bush created 2,000 new State Department positions over four years under Secretary Powell. Since 2005, the President and I requested annual budget increases for our international operations totaling \$8 billion, an increase of over 25 percent. And in the President's 2009 budget, we asked Congress to fund 1,100 new positions for the State Department and 300 new positions for USAID.

We also have begun to rethink and transform our diplomatic posture at every level. Globally, we have shifted more of our personnel to emerging powers such as India and China, Brazil and Indonesia—as well as to critical states in transition such as Lebanon, Nigeria, and Venezuela.

We have created the new Civilian Response Corps, as part of our Civilian Stabilization Initiative, to prepare America's diplomats and development professionals to lead our government's efforts in post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction missions and to support counterinsurgency.

In addition to our other development initiatives, we have worked to reform foreign assistance. We have sought to use the American taxpayer's money more effectively and efficiently, as part of comprehensive country strategies to support the unique needs of developing nations. This will enable states to move along the continuum from being recipients of foreign assistance to agents of their own political and economic transformation.

An international order that reflects our values is the best guarantee of our national interests, and the United States continues to have a unique opportunity to shape this outcome. Indeed, we already see glimpses of this better world—in Kuwaiti women gaining the right to vote, in a provincial council meeting in Kirkuk, and in the improbable sight of the US president standing with freely elected leaders before the flags of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the future state of Palestine. Shaping that world will be the work of a generation, but we have done such work before. And if we remain confident in the power of our values, we can succeed in this work again.