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Why the Bush Doctrine
Cannot Be Sustained

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With the reelection of George W. Bush, the apparent progress of democracy in Iraq and other countries in the Middle East, and the agreement of allies that Iran and North Korea should not be permitted to gain nuclear weapons, the prospects for what can be called the Bush Doctrine seem bright. I believe this impression is misleading, however, and politics within the United States and abroad is more likely to conspire against the course that Bush has set.

The Bush Doctrine, set out in numerous speeches by the President and other high-level officials and summarized in the September 2002 "National Security Strategy of the United States," consists of four elements.[1] First and perhaps most importantly, democracies are inherently peaceful and have common interests in building a benign international environment that is congenial to American interests and ideals. This means that the current era is one of great opportunity because there is almost universal agreement on the virtues of democracy. Second, this is also a time of great threat from terrorists, especially when linked to tyrannical regimes and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). A third major element of the Bush Doctrine is that deterrence and even defense are not fully adequate to deal with these dangers and so the United States must be prepared to take preventive actions, including war, if need be. In part because it is difficult to get consensus on such actions, and in part because the United States is so much stronger than its allies, the United States must be prepared to act unilaterally. Thus the fourth element of the Doctrine is that although the widest possible support should be sought, others cannot have a veto on American action.

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[1] For a more detailed discussion, see Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 118 (Fall 2003): 365–388.

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Taken together, these elements imply an extraordinarily ambitious foreign policy agenda, involving not only the transformation of international politics, but also the re-making of many states and societies along democratic lines. As Bush has so often and so eloquently said, most clearly in his second inaugural address, evil regimes can no longer be tolerated. "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in the world." Some may wonder at such far-reaching goals and sense of the virtue of the American cause, but John Adams was correct in explaining to Thomas Jefferson that "Power always sincerely, conscientiously, de tres bon Foi, believes itself Right. Power always thinks it has a great Soul, and vast Views, beyond the Comprehension of the Weak; and that it is doing God's Service, when it is violating all his Laws."[2] The unprecedented extent of American power has allowed the United States to embark on its course, but does not mean that it can endure. In fact, I think it will collapse because of the Bush Doctrine's internal contradictions and tensions, the nature of America's domestic political system, and the impossibly heavy burden placed on America's ability to understand the actors that are seen as potentially deadly menaces to it.

INTERNAL TENSIONS

The Bush Doctrine combines a war on terrorism with the strong assertion of American hegemony. Although elements arguably reinforced each other in the overthrow of the Taliban, it is far from clear that this will be the case in the future. Rooting out terrorist cells throughout the world calls for excellent information, and this requires the cooperation of intelligence services in many countries. American power allows it to deploy major incentives to induce cooperation, but there may come a point at which opposition to U.S. dominance will hamper joint efforts. The basic unilateralism of the U.S. behavior that goes with assertive hegemony as exemplified by the war in Iraq has strained the alliance bonds in a way that can make fighting terrorism more difficult.[3]

Iraq highlights a related tension in the Bush Doctrine. The administration argued that overthrowing Saddam Hussein was a part of the war on terrorism because of the danger that he would give WMD to terrorists. Bush calls Iraq the "the central front" in the counterterrorist effort, and he rhetorically asks, "If America were not fighting terrorists in Iraq, . . . what would these thousands of killers do, suddenly begin leading productive lives of service and charity?"[4]

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[2] Adams to Jefferson, February 2, 1816, in Lester Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 463.

[3] For an example, see Douglas Jehl and Thom Shanker, "Syria Stops Cooperating with U.S. Forces and C.I.A.," *New York Times*, 24 May 2005.

[4] Bush's speech to the Army War College in May 2004: "President Outlines Steps to Help Iraq Achieve Democracy and Freedom," White House press release, 24 May 2004; "Remarks by the President at the United States Air Force Academy Graduation," White House press release, 2 June 2004.

I join many observers in finding this line of argument implausible and in believing that the war was, at best, a distraction from the struggle against al Qaeda. To start with, diplomatic, military, and intelligence resources that could have been used to seek out terrorists, especially in Afghanistan, were redeployed against Iraq. In perhaps an extreme case, in June of 2002, the White House vetoed a plan to attack a leading terrorist and his poison laboratory in northern Iraq because it might have disturbed the efforts to build a domestic and international coalition to change the regime,[5] and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi later emerged as the most important insurgent in Iraq and second only to Osama bin Laden on the overall most-wanted list. More generally, thanks to the war, the United States is now seen as a major threat to peace, and in many countries, George Bush is more disliked than bin Laden.[6] Of course, foreign policy is not a popularity contest, but these views eventually will be reflected in reduced support for and co-operation with the United States. Finally and most importantly, if the United States is fighting terrorists in Iraq, the main reason is not that they have flocked to that country to try to kill Americans but that the occupation has recruited large numbers of people to the terrorist cause. Although evidence, let alone proof, is of course elusive, it is hard to avoid the inference that the war has created more terrorists than it has killed, has weakened the resolve of others to combat them, and has increased the chance of major attacks against the West.[7]

Even without the stimulus of the American occupation of Iraq, the highly assertive American policy around the world may increase the probability that it will be the target of terrorist attacks, inasmuch as others attribute most of the world's ills to America. Whether terrorists seek vengeance, publicity, or specific changes in policy, the dominant state is likely to be the one they seek to attack. American power, then, produces American vulnerability.[8] If the United States wanted to place priority on reducing its attractiveness as a target for terrorism, it could seek a reduced role in world politics. The real limits to what could be done here should not disguise the tension between protection from terror and hegemony.

[5] NBC News, 2 March 2004, Jim Miklaszewski, "Avoiding Attacking Suspected Terrorist Mastermind," accessed at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4431601/, 5 March 2004. Scot Paltrow, "Questions Mount Over Failure to Hit Zarqawi's Camp," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 October 2004.

[6] Susan Sachs, "Poll Finds Hostility Hardening Toward U.S. Policies," *New York Times*, 17 March 2004; no author, "Bush vs. bin Laden (And Other Popularity Contests)," *New York Times*, 21 March 2004; Alan Cowell, "Bush Visit Spurs Protests Against U.S. In Europe," *New York Times*, 16 November 2003.

[7] This view is held by a wide range of observers, including France's leading anti-terrorism investigator and Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, as well as (more predictably) France's Chirac: Douglas Frantz, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan Stack, "The New Face of Al Qaeda," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 September 2004; cnn.com, "Musharraf 'Reasonably Sure' bin Laden is Alive," 25 September 2004, accessed at http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/09/25/musharraf/, 26 September 2004; Craig Smith, "Chirac Says War in Iraq Spreads Terrorism," *New York Times*, 18 November 2004. It was even endorsed by the head of the CIA in early 2005: Dana Priest and Josh White, "War Helps Recruit Terrorists, Hill Told," *Washington Post*, 17 February 2005.

[8] For a related argument, see Richard Betts, "The Soft Underbelly of American Primacy: Tactical Advantages of Terror," *Political Science Quarterly* 117 (Spring 2002): 19–36.

The Bush Doctrine argues that combatting terrorism and limiting proliferation go hand in hand. They obviously do in some cases. The danger that a rogue state could provide terrorists with WMD, although implausible in the case of Iraq, is not fictitious, and controlling the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear material contributes to American security. But this does not mean that there are no trade-offs between nonproliferation and rooting out terrorism. Most obviously, Iraq's drain on American military resources, time and energy, and on the support from the international community means that the ability to deal with Iran and North Korea has been reduced. These two countries figured prominently in administration fears before September 11 and are more dangerous and perhaps more likely to provide weapons to terrorists than was Iraq. But the way the Bush administration interpreted the war on terror has hindered its ability to deal with these threats, and, in an added irony, if Iran gets nuclear weapons, the United States may be forced to provide a security guarantee for Iraq or permit that country to develop its own arsenal. Furthermore, even if better conceived, combating terrorism can call for alliances with regimes that seek or even spread nuclear weapons. The obvious example is Pakistan, a vital American ally that has been the greatest facilitator of proliferation. The United States eventually uncovered A. Q. Kahn's network and forced President Pervez Musharraf to cooperate in rolling it up, but it might have moved more quickly and strongly had it not needed Pakistan's support against al Qaeda. This compromise is not likely to be the last, and the need to choose between these goals will continue to erode the Bush Doctrine's coherence.

Despite its *realpolitik* stress on the importance of force, the Bush Doctrine also rests on idealistic foundations—the claim for the centrality of universal values represented by America, the expected power of positive example, the belief in the possibility of progress. What is important is that these have power through their acceptance by others, not through their imposition by American might. They require that others change not only their behavior but their outlook, if not their values, as well. For this to happen, the United States has to be seen as well-motivated and exemplifying shared ideals. America's success in the Cold War derived in part from its openness to allied voices, its articulation of a common vision, and a sense of common interest. Although we should not idealize this past or underestimate the degree to which allies, let alone neutrals, distrusted U.S. power and motives, neither should we neglect the ways that enabled influence to be exercised relatively cheaply and allowed the West to gain a much greater degree of unity and cooperation than many contemporary observers had believed possible.

Then, as now, the United States needed not only joint understandings but also multilateral institutions to provide for cooperation on a wide range of issues, especially economic ones. Perhaps the United States can ignore or diminish them in the security area without affecting those such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) on which it wants to continue to rely, but the possibility of undesired spillovers is not to be dismissed. If others do not expect the United States to respect limits that rules might place on it, they are less apt to see it as a trustworthy partner.

Just as the means employed by the Bush Doctrine contradict its ends, so also the latter, by being so ambitious, invite failure. Not only is it extremely unlikely that terror can ever be eradicated, let alone the world be rid of evil, but the fact that Saddam lost the war in Iraq does not mean that the United States won it. Ousting his regime was less important in itself than as a means to other objectives: reducing terrorism, bringing democracy to Iraq, transforming the Middle East, and establishing the correctness and the legitimacy of the Bush Doctrine. Although the effects of the invasion have not yet fully played out, it is hard to see it as a success in these terms. Indeed, despite the fact that the January 2005 elections in Iraq were relatively successful, the political outlook for the country is not good. Ironically, the dramatic and disabling insurgency has distracted American if not Iraqi attention from what is probably the even less-tractable problem of establishing a political settlement among those who have not (yet) resorted to arms. Overly ambitious goals invite not only defeat, but disillusion; if the experiment in Iraq does not yield satisfactory results, it will be hard to sustain support for the Doctrine in the future.

Finally, the Bush Doctrine is vulnerable because although it rests on the ability to deploy massive force, its army, despite being capable of great military feats, is not large enough to simultaneously garrison a major country and attack another adversary, and may not even be sufficient for the former task over a prolonged period. Thanks to the occupation of Iraq, the United States could not now use ground force against Iran or North Korea, and, indeed, the occupation appears to be gravely damaging the system of a volunteer army, reserves, and national guard that has proven so successful since the draft was abolished more than a quarter-century ago.

IMPERIAL OVERSTRETCH?

To succeed, the Bush Doctrine will need prolonged support from the American economic and political system. Before turning to the latter, I want to discuss the more familiar claim that the United States, like so many great powers before it, is falling victim to "imperial overstretch" as the country takes on ever more extensive and expensive commitments.[9]

This has been a common trajectory throughout history, but does not tell us much about the likely fate of the United States and the Bush Doctrine. The U.S. defense budget consumes only a small portion of gross domestic product (less than 4%); the proportion devoted to the war on terrorism, although impossible to determine with any precision, obviously is even smaller. The U.S. economy can afford this war, even for the indefinite future. Granted, there are economic impediments to continuing on the current path. Deficits in the federal budget

[9] The term is taken from Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987). A parallel argument was made earlier by Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

and balance of payments are enormous and make the United States vulnerable to external pressures because they cannot be sustained without heavy inflows from abroad.

But, as many commentators have noted, increased defense spending is not the major cause of the problem: the American policy is not doomed to fail because of lack of resources. The United States could easily balance its budget if it were willing to increase taxes. Bush has done the opposite, making this the first war in American history during which taxes have gone down, not up. The problem of an army too small for multiple commitments is probably a better case of "imperial overstretch," but here, too, it is willpower rather than manpower that is in short supply. Higher pay or the reinstitution of a modest draft could provide what is needed.

A more political argument is that these resources cannot be tapped because of resistance from Bush supporters; that is, those in the highest income brackets, who have benefitted so much from the tax cuts, would not support the expansive foreign policy if they were not being rewarded in this way, and their backing is necessary to sustaining this policy. This argument is not without its appeal, but I do not think it is correct. The rich are very happy with Bush's tax cuts, but there is no evidence that they would have opposed him and his foreign policy without them. Some targeted favors and spending programs, especially increases in agricultural subsidies, may have been necessary to maintain domestic support for the administration, but the tax cuts were not.

DOMESTIC REGIME AND POLITICS

This general line of argument points in the right direction, however. Public opinion, the structure of the U.S. government, and domestic politics make it difficult to sustain the Bush Doctrine or any other clear policy. "It seems that the United States was a very difficult country to govern," Charles de Gaulle is said to have told British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan when explaining why it was hard to count on the United States.[10] The General was correct: democracies, and especially the United States, do not find it easy to sustain a clear line of policy when the external environment is not compelling. Domestic priorities ordinarily loom large, and few Americans think of their country as having an imperial mission. Wilsonianism may provide a temporary substitute for the older European ideologies of a *mission civilisatrice* and "the white man's burden," but because it rests on the assumption that its role will be not only noble but also popular, I am skeptical that it will endure if it meets much opposition from those who are supposed to benefit from it.

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[10] Quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 244. More consistency is seen by Stephen Sestanovich, "American Maximalism," *National Interest* 79 (Spring 2005): 13–23; and Richard Betts, "The Political Support System for American Primacy," *International Affairs* 81 (January 2005): 1–14.

Under most circumstances, the American state is not strong enough to impose coherent and consistent policy guidance, which means that courses of action are shaped less by a grand design than by the pulling and hauling of varied interests, ideas, and political calculations. This is the model of pluralism that is believed by most scholars to capture a great deal of American politics. During the Cold War, realists argued that the national interest abroad, unlike the public interest at home, was sufficiently compelling to override domestic differences and enable even a relatively weak state to follow a policy of some coherence. But the prevalence of realist calls for countries and their leaders to pursue the national interest in the face of conflicting domestic claims indicates that the latter are so powerful that they are likely to prevail under ordinary circumstances.

One might think that domestic support could be arranged with adequate public education: if the experts agree, the public can be brought around. In the late 1940s, the architects of containment were able to work with opinion leaders to develop strong foundations for the policy, but by the end of the century, trust in government and other organizations was low and the sort of civic leaders that were powerful earlier had disappeared. Only conspiracy theorists see the Council on Foreign Relations as much more than a social and status group. "Captains of industry" are absent, with the possible exception of a handful of leaders in the communications and information sectors who lack the breadth of experience of earlier elites. Union leaders have disappeared even faster than unions. University presidents, who were national figures at mid-century, have become money raisers. Those newspapers that have survived are much less relied upon than was true in the past, and television anchors do not have the expertise and reputation that would allow them to be influential, even if the large corporations that own the networks would permit them to try. Known to the public now are "celebrities," largely from the sports and entertainment industries, who lack the interest and knowledge necessary to undertake the public educational campaigns we saw in the past. Thus, it is not surprising that despite Bush's convincing a majority of the American people that they would be safer with him as president than with John Kerry, he has not been able to generate strong support for his general foreign policy.

Separation of powers means that the president cannot control Congress, which can undermine the president's policies. In a minor but telling example, the need to garner crucial Congressional votes for a broad package of trade legislation made Bush promise representatives from textile-producing districts that he would maintain strict limits on clothing made in Pakistan, creating resentment in that country.[11] The judiciary also is independent, giving citizens the ability to bring suits that run contrary to the policies of the executive branch, as shown by several human rights cases brought under the Alien Tort Claims Act, a 1789 law resurrected and put to new purposes, and by the families of September 11 victims, who are suing leading figures in Saudi Arabia for having financed Islamic extremism.

[11] Keith Bradshear, "Pakistanis Fume As Clothing Sales to U.S. Tumble," *New York Times*, 23 June 2002.

At first glance, it would seem that much as the experts criticize the Bush Doctrine for its unilateralism, on this score, at least, it rests on secure domestic foundations. The line that drew the most applause in the President's 2004 State of the Union address was: "America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country." In fact, the public is, sensibly, ambivalent. Although few would argue that the lack of international support should stop the United States from acting when a failure to do so would endanger the country, polls taken in the run-up to the war in Iraq indicated that international endorsement would have added as much as 20 percentage points to support for attacking.[12] Even in a country with a strong tradition of unilateralism, people realize that international support translates into a reduced burden on the United States and increased legitimacy that can both aid the specific endeavor at hand and strengthen the patterns of cooperation that serve American interests. Furthermore, many people take endorsement by allies as an indication that the American policy is sensible. This is a great deal of the reason why Tony Blair's support for Bush was so important domestically, and this means that the Bush Doctrine is particularly vulnerable to British defection.

In summary, although the combination of Bush's preferences and the attack of September 11 have produced a coherent doctrine, domestic support is likely to erode. Congress will become increasingly assertive as the war continues, especially if it does not go well; the Democrats, although lacking a consistent policy of their own, have not accepted the validity of Bush's strategy; and although the public is united in its desire to oppose terrorism, the way to do so is disputed. The United States remains a very difficult country to govern.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INTELLIGENCE

It is particularly difficult for the Bush Doctrine to maintain public support, because preventive wars require more-accurate assessment of the international environment than intelligence can provide. The basic idea of nipping threats in the bud, of acting when there is still time, implies a willingness to accept false positives in order to avoid more-costly false negatives. That is, the United States must act on the basis of far from complete information, because if it hesitates

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[12] Richard Benedetto, "Poll: Support for War is Steady, But Many Minds Not Made Up," *USA Today*, 28 February 2003; an even larger effect was reported in Michael Tackett, "Polls Find Support for War Follows Party Lines," *Chicago Tribune*, 7 March 2003. Some findings indicate that what was seen as crucial was support from allies, not necessarily the UN: Gary Younge, "Threat of War: Americans Want UN Backing Before War," *The Guardian* (Manchester), 26 February 2003; for data and analysis that shows continued American support for multilateralism, see the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations 2004 public opinion survey, accessed at http://www.ccfr.org/globalviews2004/main.html, 22 November 2004; and Ole Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), especially ch. 6.

until the threat is entirely clear, it will be too late: it cannot afford to wait until the smoking gun is a mushroom cloud, to use the phrase the administration favored before the Iraq war. In principle, this is quite reasonable. The costs of a WMD attack are so high that a preventive war could be rational even if retrospect were to reveal that it was not actually necessary.

Even if this approach is intellectually defensible, however, it is not likely to succeed politically. The very nature of a preventive war means that the evidence is ambiguous and the supporting arguments are subject to rebuttal. If Britain and France had gone to war with Germany before 1939, large segments of the public would have believed that the war was not necessary. If the war had gone well, public opinion might still have questioned its wisdom; had it gone badly, the public would have been inclined to sue for peace. At least as much today, the cost of a war that is believed to be unnecessary will be high in terms of both international and domestic opinion and will sap the support for the policy. (Indeed, in the case of Iraq, the administration chose not to admit that the war was not forced on it despite the clear evidence that the central claims used to justify it were incorrect.[13]) Even if the public does not judge that the administration should be turned out of power for its mistake, it is not likely to want the adventure to be repeated.

Preventive war, then, asks a great deal of intelligence. It does not bode well for the Bush Doctrine that not only did the war in Iraq involve a massive intelligence failure concerning WMD (which is different from saying that it was caused by this failure), but also the United States started the war two days ahead of schedule because agents incorrectly claimed to know the whereabouts of Saddam Hussein and his sons. The amazing accuracy of the munitions that destroyed the location only underlined the falsity of the information.

The case for preventive war against Iraq turned on the claim that it had active WMD programs, and so, in retrospect, the question is often posed as to whether the intelligence was faulty or whether the Bush administration distorted it.[14] I think the former was dominant but the latter should not be ignored.

[13] Supporters of President Bush believe that such weapons were found, however: see the survey by the Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, "The Separate Realities of Bush and Kerry Supporters," 21 October 2004, accessed at http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Pres_Election_04/Report10_21_04.pdf, 29 October 2004.

[14] The official American and British post-mortems not only provide a good deal of information, but exemplify, and indeed parody, the conventional wisdom about the two countries' political cultures. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) report, *US Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq* (7 July 2004) is more than just critical of the CIA, it is both a brief for the prosecution and quite partisan. It is also extremely long and detailed. It exemplifies the American penchant for as much information as possible and an adversarial approach to public policy questions. The WMD Commission Report to the President of 31 March 2005 is better. The British report of a committee of Privy Counselors chaired by the Rt Hon The Lord Butler of Brockwell KG GCB CVO, *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* (14 July 2004), is shorter, displays a good understanding of the problems of intelligence, is embarrassingly exculpatory, but makes some good points in a subtle manner.

The possibility of intelligence being "politicized" (that is, being a product of policy more than an input to it) comes in multiple forms, of which two are the most obvious.[15] One is decision makers' giving inaccurate accounts of intelligence reports, and the other is their putting pressure on intelligence so that they get back the message they want to hear. I believe that both forms were present but that the latter was a relatively small part of the story. Top administration officials made claims that went significantly beyond what was in intelligence estimates, and, indeed, contradicted them. When they did not say that their statements were grounded in agreed-upon intelligence, this was implied. Most famously, the President said that the British reported that Saddam had sought uranium from Africa (true, but a reasonable listener would infer that American intelligence agreed, which was not true), the Vice President and the Secretary of Defense said that there was solid evidence for connections between Iraq and al Qaeda, and many policy makers insisted that the WMD threat was "imminent." The intelligence community disagreed, and, indeed, CIA Director George Tenet testified that he privately corrected officials for claims like these.[16]

Many people have argued that intelligence was politicized in the sense that there was great pressure on intelligence to tell the policy makers what they wanted to hear. It became obvious that the intelligence community had stretched to support policy when it released a declassified report that painted a more vivid and certain picture of WMD capabilities than it had presented in the classified counterparts, dropping fifteen "probablies" and several dissents.[17] But I believe that few of the major misjudgments can be attributed to political

[15] A devastating analysis of the way in which the administration distorted and misstated intelligence is Senator Carl Levin, "Report of an Inquiry into the Alternative Analysis of the Issue of an Iraq–al Qaeda Relationship," 21 October 2004, accessed at www. Levin.senate.gov, 28 October 2004. On politicization in general, see H. Bradford Westerfield, "Inside Ivory Bunkers: CIA Analysts Resist Managers' 'Pandering', Part I," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 9 (Winter 1996/97): 407–424; H. Bradford Westerfield, "Inside Ivory Bunkers: CIA Analysts Resist Managers' 'Pandering', Part II," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 10 (Spring 1997): 19–56; Jack Davis, "Analytic Professionalism and the Policymaking Process," Sherman Kent for Intelligence Analysis Occasional Papers, vol. 2, October 2003 (Washington DC: CIA); and Richard Betts, "Politicization of Intelligence: Costs and Benefits" in Richard Betts and Thomas Mahnken, eds., *Paradoxes of Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael Handel* (London: Cass, 2003), 59–79. My analysis assumes that the administration believed that Saddam had WMD. Although no evidence has been produced to the contrary, one significant bit of behavior raises doubts: the failure of U.S. forces to launch a careful search for WMD as they moved through Iraq. Had there been stockpiles of WMD materials, there would have been a grave danger that these would have fallen into the hands of America's enemies, perhaps including terrorists. I cannot explain the U.S. failure, but the conduct of much of the U.S. occupation points to incompetence.

[16] Douglas Jehl, "C.I.A. Chief Says He's Corrected Cheney Privately," *New York Times*, 10 March 2004.

[17] Jessica Mathews and Jeff Miller, "A Tale of Two Intelligence Estimates," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 31 March 2004; Donald Kennedy, "Intelligence Science: Reverse Peer Review?" *Science* 303 (March 2004): 194; Center for American Progress, "Neglecting Intelligence, Ignoring Warnings," 28 January 2004, accessed at http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=24889, 28 January 2004.

pressure. The report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and that of the WMD commission found little politicization, and while the former is itself a political document, intelligence officers truly believed that Saddam was actively pursuing WMD programs and few of them have complained, even anonymously, that they acted under duress.

Three kinds of comparisons raise further doubts about the role of political pressure. First and most obviously, in other areas, the CIA came to conclusions that were unpalatable to the administration. Three months before the war, the National Intelligence Council warned that the aftermath of the invasion was not likely to be easy and that attacking might increase support for terrorists in the Islamic world.[18] Even more strikingly, intelligence consistently denied that there was significant evidence for Saddam's role in September 11 or that he might turn over WMD to al Qaeda, holding to this position in the face of administration statements to the contrary, endlessly repeated inquiries and challenges that can only be interpreted as pressure, and the formation of a unit in the Defense Department dedicated to finding evidence for such connections. The administration's pressure was illegitimate, but the lack of success not only speaks to the integrity of the intelligence officials, but also cuts against, although cannot disprove, the claim that the reports on WMD were biased by the desire to please.

The other two comparisons also point in the same direction. Although we do not know the details of the estimates of German and French intelligence, it appears that their views paralleled those of the CIA despite the fact that their governments opposed the war. This indicates that the American judgment could be reached without political pressure (and perhaps in the face of pressure to conclude the contrary). A comparison with the Clinton-era estimates also is informative. Under Bush, intelligence reported a more robust program, including the claim that Iraq had restarted its nuclear program and had a stockpile of biological agents.[19] But quite a bit of new information, only later revealed as misleading, supported these changes and, even more importantly, the gap between the Bush and Clinton estimates was less than that which separated the latter from what we now believe was true.

Although the intense political atmosphere cannot explain the fundamental conclusion that Saddam had active WMD programs, it was not conducive to critical analysis and encouraged judgments of excessive certainty. Analysts and intelligence managers knew that any suggestion that Saddam's capabilities were limited would immediately draw hostile fire from their superiors. Indeed, in this political climate, it would have been hard for anyone to even ask if the conventional wisdom about Saddam's WMD programs should be reexamined.

[18] Douglas Jehl and David Sanger, "Prewar Assessment on Iraq Saw Chance of Strong Divisions," *New York Times*, 28 September 2004.

[19] The best analysis is Joseph Cirincione, Jessica Mathews, George Perkovitch, and Alexis Orton, *WMD in Iraq*: *Evidence and Implications* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, January 2004); also see David Isenberg and Ian Davis, "Unravelling the Known Unknowns: Why No Weapons of Mass Destruction Have Been Found in Iraq," British American Security Information Council Special Report 2004.1, January 2004; David Cortright, Alistair Millar, George Lopez, and Linda Gerber, "The

Political pressures represent the tribute that vice plays to virtue and may be a modern phenomenon. That is, leaders, at least in the United States and the U.K., now need to justify their foreign policies by saying that they are based on the findings of intelligence professionals, as is illustrated by the fact that Secretary of State Colin Powell demanded that Director of Central Intelligence Tenet sit behind him when he gave his speech to the UN outlining the case against Iraq. This is a touching faith in the concept of professionalism and in how much can be known about other states. It is not the only way things could be. A leader could say, "I think Saddam is a terrible menace. This is a political judgment and I have been elected to make difficult calls like this. Information rarely can be definitive and, although I have listened to our intelligence services and other experts, this is my decision, not theirs." Perhaps unfortunately, this is politically very difficult to do, however, and a policy maker who wants to proceed in the face of ambiguous or discrepant information will be hard pressed to avoid at least some politicization of intelligence.[20]

This returns us to the fundamental question of why the intelligence was so wrong. First and most fundamentally, intelligence is hard and there is no *a priori* reason to expect success. Intelligence services are engaged in a competitive game, with hiders and deceivers usually having the advantage. Failure may not call for any special explanation, but it may be what we should expect in the absence of particularly favorable circumstances. This is not a new insight; the only fault with what Carl Von Clausewitz has to say is that he implies that the difficulties are less in peacetime: "Many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain."[21]

Second and relatedly, the United States had little reliable information about Iraq. It lacked well-placed agents and, in their absence, could not readily see that most of the reports it did receive were unreliable or deceptive. Some of these reports may have been inadvertently misleading if they accurately reported what Saddam's officials believed, because it turns out that Saddam was misleading them.[22] Ironically, the problem was magnified by the fact that the Iraqi WMD program became a top priority for American intelligence. Because everyone in the intelligence chain knew that the government was extraordi-

Flawed Case for the War in Iraq," Fourth Freedom Forum and Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, Policy Brief F12, June 2003; "Opening Statement of Senator Carl Levin at Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing with DCI Tenet and DIA Director Jacoby," 9 March 2004, accessed at http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2004_hr/levin030904.html, 10 March 2004.

[20] It now appears that some of the friction between Undersecretary of State John Bolton and intelligence officials over how to characterize Cuban biological programs concerned whether his speech represented a political judgment or a report on the intelligence consensus: Douglas Jehl, "Released E-Mail Exchanges Reveal More Bolton Battles," *New York Times*, 24 April 2005; Douglas Jehl, "Bolton Asserts Independence On Intelligence," *New York Times*, 12 May 2005.

[21] Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 117. Anyone who sees intelligence errors in terms of the failure to "connect the dots" does not understand the problem.

[22] SSCI, *U.S. Intelligence*, 65.

narily interested in what Iraq was doing in this area, all sorts of reports were generated and passed on, thereby producing the incorrect impression that with this much smoke, there had to be fire. The problem was compounded by the failure to tell the analysts that photographic coverage had increased in 2002, leading them to incorrectly infer that the increased activity they saw at chemical sites represented increased activity rather than increased surveillance.[23]

Third, intelligence agencies learned—and overlearned—from the past. After the 1991 Gulf War, intelligence was shocked to learn how much it had underestimated Iraq's WMD programs, especially in the nuclear area, and it was not going to make this error again. Relatedly, intelligence had learned how effective Saddam's programs of deception and denial were, and this meant that any failure to find specific evidence could be attributed to Iraq's success at hiding it. All this was compounded by the Rumsfeld Commission of 1998 that berated the CIA for basing its missile estimates on the assumption that adversaries would adopt the same methodical path to acquiring these weapons that the United States had followed.

Fourth, once a view of the other side becomes established, it will remain unquestioned in the absence of powerful information to the contrary. Intelligence analysts, like everyone else, assimilate incoming information into their preexisting beliefs. In the early 1990s, almost everyone came to believe that Saddam had active WMD programs. Without complete and thorough inspections to show that this was not the case, it was natural that people would interpret ambiguous information as not only consistent with but also as confirming this "fact."

The driving role of preexisting beliefs and images is shown by the fact that people who were predisposed to believe that Saddam might ally with Osama bin Laden gave great credit to the scattered and ambiguous reports of such ties, while those whose general views of the Iraqi regime made them skeptical that it would do this found the evidence unconvincing. Similarly, the differences in evaluations of the reports that Saddam was trying to acquire uranium from Niger and that his unmanned aircraft might be intended to strike the United States are explained not by the evidence, which was held in common by all involved, or by better or worse reasoning power, but rather by the analysts' differing general beliefs about whether such policies did or did not make sense.

The final explanation is probably most important: given Saddam's behavior, his protestations that he had disarmed were implausible. That is why most opponents of the war did not dispute the basic claim that Saddam had active WMD programs. If he did not, why did he not welcome the inspectors and actively show that he had complied? Doing so under Clinton could have led to the sanctions being lifted; doing so in 2002–2003 was the only way he could have saved his regime. Iraq could have provided a complete and honest account-

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[23] WMD Commission, "Report to the President," 92–93.

ing of its weapons programs as called for by the UN resolution, and although the Bush administration would not have been convinced, other countries might have been and domestic opposition might have been emboldened. Similarly, Iraq could have mounted an effective rebuttal to Powell's UN speech. The regime's failure to do these things left even opponents of the war with little doubt that Saddam had active and serious WMD programs.

Even in retrospect, Saddam's behavior is puzzling. The post-war Duelfer Report, although speculative and based on only scattered information because Saddam and his top lieutenants did not speak freely, gives us the best available evidence. This evidence reveals that Saddam felt the need to maintain the appearance of WMD in order to deter Iran, that he feared that unlimited inspections would allow the United States to pinpoint his location and assassinate him, that private meetings between the inspectors and scientists were resisted because "any such meeting with foreigners was seen as a threat to the security of the Regime," and that "Iraq did not want to declare anything that documented use of chemical weapons [in the war with Iran] for fear the documentation could be used against Iraq in lawsuits."[24] Saddam's general policy seems to have been to first end sanctions and inspections and then to reconstitute his programs, all the while keeping his real and perceived adversaries at bay. "This led to a difficult balancing act between the need to disarm to achieve sanctions relief while at the same time retaining a strategic deterrent. The Regime never resolved the contradiction inherent in this approach."[25] This is putting it mildly. Full compliance with the inspectors was the only way that sanctions were going to be lifted, especially after September 11. It is true that revealing that he had no WMD would have reduced his deterrence, but the fear of such weapons could not and did not prevent an American attack, and Iran was hardly spoiling for a fight and could not have assumed that the West would stand aside while it greatly increased its influence by moving against Iraq. Saddam's policy was, then, foolish and self-defeating and goes a long way to explaining the Western intelligence failure. When the truth is as bizarre as this, it is not likely to be believed.

Although this last factor made the Iraq case particularly difficult, future cases are not likely to be easy, and intelligence will continue to be faulty. The National Security Strategy document says that in order to support preventive options, the United States "will build better, more integrated intelligence capa-

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[24] "Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD," 30 September 2004 (Duelfer Report), 29, 55, 62, 64. John Mueller had earlier speculated that Saddam's limitations on the inspectors were motivated by his fear of assassination: "Letters to the Editor: Understanding Saddam," *Foreign Affairs* 83 (July/August 2004): 151.

[25] Duelfer Report, 34, 57. Ending economic sanctions and ending inspections would not necessarily have coincided and it is not clear which of them was viewed as most troublesome, or why. The UN resolutions provided for the latter to continue even after the former ended, and Saddam had terminated inspections in 1998. This presents a puzzle, because if inspections had been the main barrier, Saddam should have resumed his programs at that point, as most observers expected he would. But it is hard to see how the sanctions were inhibiting him, because after the institution of the Oil for Food program, the regime had access to sufficient cash to procure much of what it needed.

bilities to provide timely, accurate information on threats, wherever they emerge," but this is not likely to be possible.[26] Of course the CIA will get some important cases right, but I suspect that success will be less the rule than the exception. It appears that the United States knows even less about the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea than it did about Iraq's, and the latter failure's main contribution to improving intelligence about the former has been to reduce the confidence with which judgments are expressed. This is useful, but hardly solves the problem. The establishment of a Director of National Intelligence and the accompanying reorganization is not likely to improve things much either, and the demoralization and dislocation is almost certain to decrease the quality of intelligence in the short run. A policy that can only work if the assessments of other actors are quite accurate is likely to fail. Thus, the Bush Doctrine places a heavier burden on intelligence than it can bear.

Rebuttal

Proponents of the Bush Doctrine can argue that this line of argument is irrelevant. As noted earlier, the dominant view in the administration is that a state's foreign policy follows from its domestic political system. This is a very American approach, extending back to Woodrow Wilson if not earlier, and having significant appeal to liberal elites and the public. It also fits with a cursory look at the last century's history, with Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler being two leaders who tyrannized over their own subjects before turning their venom on the wider world. In this view, evil regimes follow evil foreign policies. This means that consequential assessment errors will be quite rare. Even when intelligence has difficulty estimating the other's capabilities, it is very easy to tell when its regime is repressive. Thus, knowing that North Korea, Iran, and Syria are brutal autocracies tells us that they will seek to dominate their neighbors, sponsor terrorism, and threaten the United States.

Indeed, in the wake of the failure to find WMD after the war in Iraq, this has become the main line of the Bush administration's defense of its actions. Perhaps the United States had a few more years to respond than was believed, but because removing Saddam was the only way to remove the danger, this error was minor. As Bush told Tim Russert, "Saddam was dangerous with the ability to make weapons."[27] This approach turns on its head the normal mantra

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[26] White House, "The National Security Strategy of the United States," (Washington DC: September 2002), 16. Similarly, in defending the idea of preventive war, Condoleezza Rice said that it "has to be used carefully. One would want to have very good intelligence": *Online NewsHour*, "Rice on Iraq, War and Politics," 25 September 2002, accessed at www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/international/july-dec02/rice_9-25.html, 15 September 2003.

[27] NBC, *Meet the Press*, interview with Tim Russert, 8 February 2004, accessed at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4179618/, 2 November 2004; also, see Bush interview with Diane Sawyer, "Ultimate Penalty," 16 December 2003, accessed at http://abcnews.go.com/sections/primetime/US/bush_sawyer_excerpts_1_031216.html, 20 December 2003. Colin Powell said something similar in "Remarks on the Occasion of George Kennan's Centenary Birthday," 20 February 2004, accessed at http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/29683pf.htm, 21 February 2004, despite having taken a somewhat different position

of conservative intelligence analysis that one should concentrate on capabilities, not intentions. For a regime like this, Bush and his colleagues claim, what is crucial is that it was evil and had the intention to get WMD.

This approach has two difficulties, however. First, taken to its logical conclusion, it implies a very much reduced need for intelligence. It does not take spies or expensive satellites to determine that a country is repressive, and if that is all that we need to know, we can save a great deal of money. Second, even if it is true that the countries that abuse their neighbors are those that have abused their own people, many of the latter follow a quiescent foreign policy. Mao's China, for example, was second to none in internal oppression but followed a cautious if not benign foreign policy. Thus, although knowing that only repressive regimes are threats to the United States would indeed be useful, it does not solve the basic conundrum facing the doctrine of preventive war: deciding which countries pose threats grave enough to merit taking the offensive.

UNDERSTANDING ADVERSARIES

My previous discussion, like most treatments of the subject, has concentrated on specific intelligence problems of the mis-estimates of Iraq's WMD programs. But the war also revealed a broader kind of failure, one that is quite common and that also makes it difficult to sustain the Bush Doctrine: the inability to understand the way Saddam viewed the world and the strategy that he was following, and the related failure of the United States to adequately convey its intentions and capabilities to him. As subsequent events demonstrated, the United States had the ability to rapidly overthrow Saddam, if not to rapidly pacify the country, and to capture him. It also seemed clear to most of the world that the United States would carry out its threat if need be. Saddam then seemed willfully blind, and as a result, the United States could not coerce him despite its great capability and credibility. This is puzzling. During the Cold War, we became accustomed to the disturbing fact that although the United States could not protect itself, it could deter the Soviet Union from attacking or undertaking major adventures. Elaborate, controversial, and, I believe, basically correct theories were developed to explain how deterrence was possible in the absence of defense. But we now have the reverse situation, and this represents the failure of both policy and theory. Because the United States had the ability to defeat Saddam and the incentives to do so if necessary, Saddam should have backed down, and invasion should not have been necessary.

Four possible explanations are compatible with general theories of coercion but cast doubt on the effectiveness of many American strategies that could be used to support the Bush Doctrine. First, despite the fact that most observers

the week before: Glenn Kessler, "Powell: Arms Doubts Might Have Affected View of War," *Washington Post*, 3 February 2004.

believed the American threats, Saddam may not have. Dictatorships are notoriously impervious to unpleasant information; dictators are usually closedminded and often kill those who bring bad news. Saddam could have believed that even if his troops could not defeat the invading army, they could delay them long enough to force mediation by France and Russia. Perhaps he also thought that the United States would be deterred by the recognition that it could not consolidate its military victory in the face of insurgency, nationalism, and political divisions among the anti-Baathist groups.[28] Although this chain of reasoning now has some appeal, it is far from clear that it was Saddam's and, on balance, it remains hard to see how he could have expected to keep the United States at bay. Second, Saddam could have preferred martyrdom to compliance. Political and perhaps physical death could have given him personal honor and great stature in the Arab world; both honor and stature could have been gratifying and the latter might have furthered his political dreams. Although we cannot rule this out, these values and preferences do not seem to accord with his previous behavior.

Third, Saddam may have underestimated the incentives that Bush had to overthrow him. As hard as this is to believe, Duelfer reports that high-level interrogations indicate that "by late 2002 Saddam had persuaded himself that the United States would not attack Iraq because it already had achieved its objectives of establishing a military presence in the region."[29] Finally, Saddam may have believed that he did not have an alternative that would leave him in power. As Thomas Schelling stressed long ago, making threats credible will do no good unless the actor simultaneously conveys a credible promise not to carry out the undesired action if the other side complies.[30] During most of the runup to the invasion, the Bush administration made clear that its goal was regime change. Only for a few months in late 2002 when the administration sought support from Congress and the UN did it argue that it would be satisfied by Saddam's compliance with UN resolutions. It would have been easy, and indeed rational, for Saddam to have believed that this American position was a sham, that submitting would give him at best a brief lease on life, and that the only possible route to survival was to bluff and exaggerate his WMD capability in the hope that the United States would back down rather than risk the high casualties that WMD could inflict.[31]

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[28] For evidence for reasoning along these lines, see the Duelfer Report, 11, 66–67.

[29] Ibid., 32. It is also possible that Saddam believed that the United States actually knew he did not have WMD and this, too, would have reduced the pressures on the United States to invade: Bob Drogin, "Through Hussein's Looking Glass," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 October 2004. For another attempt to recreate Saddam's views, see David Kay, "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: Lessons Learned and Unlearned," *Miller Center Report* 20 (Spring/Summer 2004): 7–14. Also see Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2004), 265–266.

[30] Thomas Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[31] Indeed, shortly before the war, the Bush administration returned to the position that to avoid invasion, Saddam would not only have to disarm, but also would have to step down: Felicity Barringer and David Sanger, "U.S. Says Hussein Must Cede Power To Head Off War," *New York Times*, 1 March 2003.

This argument is certainly plausible and probably is part of the answer. But doubts are raised about the adequacy of this or any particularistic account by the fact that the phenomenon is quite general.[32] The United States failed to understand the beliefs and calculations that led Stalin to authorize the North Korean invasion of the South in June of 1950 or the People's Republic of China intervention several months later, for example. Other countries can be similarly blind: despite its intensive study of its adversary, Israel was unable to grasp the strategy that led Anwar Sadat to launch his attack across the Suez Canal in October of 1973, or to go to Jerusalem four years later, for that matter.

What is most striking and relevant to the Bush Doctrine is that since the end of the Cold War, there have been five instances in which the United States has had to use force because the threat to do so was not perceived as credible despite being supported by adequate capability and willpower. The first case was Panama in 1989. Here it can be argued that Manuel Noriega had little reason to believe the threat, because the United States had not carried out operations like this before, public support was unclear, and memories of Vietnam lingered. Furthermore, as in Iraq, the adversary's leader might not have been able to change his behavior in a way that would have allowed him to remain in power.

The second case was the Gulf War. Because the United States made no attempt to deter an attack on Kuwait, the puzzle here is not why Saddam invaded,[33] but his refusal to withdraw despite the presence of 500,000 coalition troops poised against him. In fact, he may have been convinced at the last minute, with the war attributable to the difficulties in making arrangements with so little time remaining and the American preference to destroy the Iraqi forces rather than allowing them to withdraw and be available for future adventures. Other factors may also have been at work, such as Saddam's residual belief that he could deter the United States by inflicting large numbers of casualties, or his calculation that a bloodless withdrawal would cost him more in the eyes of his own people and his Arab neighbors than would a limited military defeat. Nevertheless, this incident is a disturbing failure of coercion despite massive military superiority and a display that convinced most observers that the United States would use it.

[32] For excellent studies of when coercion does and does not succeed in changing behavior, see Alexander George, David Hall, and William Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1971); Alexander George and William Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); Robert Art and Patrick Cronin, eds., *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy* (Washington DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2003). For a discussion of failures of coercion that cannot be explained by standard theories, see Richard Ned Lebow and Janis Gross Stein, "Deterrence: The Elusive Dependent Variable," *World Politics* 42 (April 1990): 336–369; Richard Ned Lebow and Janis Gross Stein, "Beyond Deterrence," *Journal of Social Issues* 43 (No. 4 1987): 5–72.

[33] For good if conflicting accounts, see Gregory Gause III, "Iraq's Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990," *Middle East Journal* 56 (Winter 2002): 47–70; and Fred Lawson, "Rethinking the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," *Review of International Affairs* 1 (Autumn 2001): 1–20.

The third case is Haiti in 1996. Although Bill Clinton did not have to fight to oust the junta, he did have to put the invasion force into the air before General Raoul Cedras and his colleagues believed that they had no choice but to abdicate.[34] This was, then, a close thing, and although the previous American hesitations may have given Haitian leaders reason to doubt that the United States would use force, as the American position hardened, most observers understood that Clinton would act if he needed to. Of course, here, as in Panama, the resistance was greatly heightened by the fact that the American demand entailed removing the adversary from power. It remains striking, however, that this coercion proved so difficult.

The next case of failed coercion was the operation in Kosovo. Clinton and his colleagues believed that if Slobodan Milosevic did not back down in the face of the American/NATO threat to use force, he would do so after a day or two of bombing. In the event, it took much more than that; although an actual invasion was not needed, the amount of force required was quite large. Again, the reason is, in part, that the United States was requiring a great deal from Milosevic. He viewed Kosovo as part of Serbia, had gained power by arousing public opinion on this issue, and had reason to fear that he would be overthrown if he withdrew, as, in fact, proved to be the case. Indeed, the puzzle of why he did not back down initially is complemented by the questions surrounding his eventual concessions. What happened during the air campaign to lead him to change his mind? Many individual authors are sure of the answer, but each gives a different one and we cannot yet determine the relative importance of the bombing of Serbian army units, the damage to Belgrade, the targeting of assets that belonged to Milosevic's circle of supporters, the lack of backing and eventual pressure from Russia, and the fear of a ground invasion. What is clear and crucial is that the United States did not understand Milosevic's perceptions and strategy, just as he almost surely did not understand the American preferences and options.

These thumbnail sketches lead to four conclusions. First, intelligence failures are often bilateral, if not multilateral.[35] That is, the American surprise at finding that its adversaries could not be coerced was mirrored by the adversaries' misreading of what the United States would do. Second, whatever policy the United States adopts, it is important for it to do a better job of understanding its adversaries and conveying its promises and threats to them. Although the task is difficult, it is striking how little the U.S. government has sought to learn from these troublesome cases, despite the fact that it now has access to many of the decision makers on the other side. The American propensity to treat past events as mere history is nowhere more evident and costly than here.

[34] For the argument that this extreme military pressure made a political settlement more difficult to reach, see Robert Pastor, "The Delicate Balance Between Coercion and Diplomacy: The Case of Haiti, 1994" in Art and Cronin, eds., *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, 119–156.

[35] For further discussion, see Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 44–45.

Third, it is unlikely that even excellent studies will provide a base of knowledge sufficient to prevent all such errors in the future. The ways in which adversaries can perceive and calculate are too numerous and surprising to permit confident projections. The past decade's meetings of Cold War veterans reveal mutual amazement that the other side could have believed what it did, and the current task is more difficult still because the United States is no longer dealing with one fairly stable adversary over a prolonged period.

Finally, the Bush Doctrine places heavy demands on judging adversaries. If the United States is to block proliferation and engage in preventive wars when rogues get close to WMD, it will need a far better understanding of others than it has been able to muster so far. Conversely, if the United States is not able to gain more discriminating intelligence about the capabilities and intentions of potential rogues, the Doctrine will require the use of force to change any number of regimes. But it is unlikely that American domestic politics would support such a policy.

DEMOCRACY AS THE ANSWER?

Here, as in the earlier problem of intelligence failure, the Bush administration's faith in democracy provides a rebuttal: these threats will disappear as more and more countries become democratic. I am doubtful, however, that the United States will, in fact, vigorously support the establishment of democracies abroad, that such efforts will succeed, and that democratic regimes will always further American interests.

The question of whether to press for democracies abroad arose during the Cold War, and the basic problem was summarized in John F. Kennedy's oft-quoted reaction when the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo, was assassinated in May of 1961: "There are three possibilities, in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we really can't renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third."[36] Despite the fact that the United States has more room to maneuver now that it does not have to worry about a new regime allying with a major enemy state, there appears to be a great deal of continuity between the U.S. policy during the Cold War, what it did in the first decade after it, and Bush's actions. While the United States hopes to replace hostile dictatorships with democracies, only rarely does it push for democracy when doing so could destabilize friendly regimes. It would be tiresome to recount the sorry but perhaps sensible history of U.S. policies toward Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, and I will just note that when the latter arrested reformers who had called for a constitutional monar-

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[36] Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 769.

chy and independent human rights monitoring, Colin Powell said that "each nation has to find its own path and follow that path at its own speed."[37] Over the past year, Bush and his colleagues have taken a somewhat stronger position, but the depth of the American commitment still remains unclear.[38]

Ironically, the war on terrorism, although accompanied by greater stress on the value of democracy, has increased the costs of acting accordingly by increasing the American need for allies throughout the globe. Without the war, the United States might have put more pressure on the nondemocratic states of the former Soviet Union, or at least not supported them. But the need for bases in Central Asia has led the United States to embrace a particularly unsavory set of regimes. The pressure to democratize Pakistan is similarly minimal, in part because of the fear that greater responsiveness to public opinion would lead to an unacceptable Islamic regime. This danger, and that of any kind of instability, is magnified because of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Although Egypt lacks nuclear weapons, instability in such a powerful and centrally placed country is also greatly to be feared. In other parts of the Middle East and areas such as the Caspian basin, it is the need for a secure flow of oil that leads the United States to support nondemocratic regimes. As events in Uzbekistan in the spring of 2005 show, it seems that there are few places that are unimportant enough to run the experiment of vigorously supporting democracies where they do not now exist when the existing repressive regime has good control. Bush can increase the (verbal) pressure on Vladimir Putin to democratize, in part because his government has such a secure grip.

Furthermore, the Bush administration appears to be driven more by the politics of the regimes it is dealing with than by an abstract commitment to democracy, as is shown by its stance toward if not its role in the opposition (constitutional or otherwise) to, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti. In a continuation of the Cold War pattern, leftist governments are seen as dangerous and authoritarian regimes of the right are acceptable. On other occasions, it is the specific policies of a leader that make him unacceptable despite his popular approval. The American refusal to treat Yasser Arafat as the Palestinians' leader was rooted in the belief that he was unwilling to stop terrorism, not in his inability to win an election, and the United States withdrew its recognition of President Rauf Denktash in Turkish Cyprus when he opposed proposals for reunifying the island.[39]

[37] Quoted in Barbara Slavin, "U.S. Softens Stance on Mideast Democratic Reforms," *USA Today*, 12 April 2004; for later developments, see Barbara Slavin, "U.S. Toning Down Goals for Mideast," *USA Today*, 27 May 2004. For a general discussion of the prospects for liberalization in the Middle East and the American efforts, see Tamara Cofman Wittes, "The Promise of American Liberalism," *Policy Review* 125 (June/July 2004): 61–76.

[38] For some of the tensions and contradictions, see Elisabeth Bumiller, "The First Lady's Mideast Sandstorm," *New York Times*, 6 June 2005.

[39] No author, "U.S. Recognizes New Leader for Turkish Cypriots," *New York Times*, 27 May 2004; The refusal to deal with Arafat has been extended to Hamas, despite its electoral success: Steven Weisman, "U.S. to Shun Hamas Members, Even if Democratically Elected," *New York Times*, 7 June 2005.

But even vigorous support for democracy might not produce that outcome. The fate of Iraq may not yet be determined, and, at this writing, anything appears to be possible, from a partially democratic regime to a civil war to the return of a national strongman to the loss of national unity. But it is hard to believe that the foreseeable future will see a full-fledged democracy, with extensive rule of law, open competition, a free press, and checks and balances.[40] The best that can be hoped for would be a sort of semi-democracy, such as we see in Russia or Nigeria, to take two quite different countries.

The Bush administration's position is much more optimistic, however, arguing that for democracy to flourish, all that is needed is for repression to be struck down. With a bit of support, all countries can become democratic; far from being the product of unusually propitious circumstances, a free and pluralist system is the "natural order" that will prevail unless something special intervenes.[41] President Bush devoted a full speech to this subject, saying: "Time after time, observers have questioned whether this country, or that people, or this group, are 'ready' for democracy—as if freedom were a prize you win for meeting our own Western standards of progress. In fact, the daily work of democracy is itself the path of progress."[42] This means that for him, the prospects for Iraq are bright. In his view, although it is true that you cannot force people to be democratic, this is not necessary. All that is needed is to allow people to be democratic.

We would all like this vision to be true, but it probably is not. Even if there are no conditions that are literally necessary for the establishment of democracy, this form of government is not equally likely to flourish under all conditions. Poverty, deep divisions, the fusion of secular and religious authority, militaristic traditions and institutions, and a paucity of attractive careers for defeated politicians all inhibit democracy.[43] Although Bush is at least partly right

[40] A cautionary tale is provide by the memoirs of the British commander in the newly created Iraq after World War I: Sir Arnold Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917–1920: A Clash of Loyalties* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 259, 268–272, 311–312.

[41] For the concept of natural order, see Stephen Toulmin, *Foresight and Understanding: An Enquiry into the Aims of Science* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961). For an intriguing argument that democracy will indeed flourish in the absence of imposed obstacles, see John Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); for an excellent analysis that is skeptical of the ease of democratic transitions, see Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002): 5–21.

[42] "President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," White House press release, 6 November 2003, 3; also see "President Discusses the Future of Iraq," speech to the American Enterprise Institute, White House press release, 26 February 2003; "President Attends International Republican Institute Dinner," White House press release, 18 May 2005.

[43] See Ian Shapiro, "The State of Democratic Theory" in Ira Katznelson, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: Norton, 2002), 235–265; Barbara Geddes, "The Great Transformation in the Study of Politics in Developing Countries" in Ira Katznelson, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: Norton, 2002), 342–370; Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvaraz, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); for a critique, see Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55 (July 2003): 517–549.

in arguing that some of these conditions arise out of authoritarian regimes, they are causes as well and there is no reason to expect the United States to be able to make most countries democratic even if it were to bend all its efforts to this end. Indeed, movements for reform and democracy may suffer if they are seen as excessively beholden to the United States. As Colin Powell noted after one American attempt of this type had to be abandoned in the face of cries of U.S. bullying, "I think we are now getting a better understanding with the Arab nations that it has to be something that comes from them. If you don't want us to help, you don't want us to help."[44]

Is it even true that the world would be safer and the United States better off if many more countries were democratic? The best-established claim that democracies rarely, if ever, fight each other is not entirely secure, and the more sophisticated versions of this theory stress that joint democracy will not necessarily produce peace unless other factors, especially economic interdependence and a commitment to human rights, are present as well. This makes sense, because democracy is compatible with irreconcilable conflicts of interest. Furthermore, even if well-established democracies do not fight each other, states that are undergoing transitions to democracy do not appear to be similarly pacifistic.[45] Putting these problems aside, there is no reason to expect democracies to be able to get along well with nondemocracies, which means that establishing democracy in Iraq or in any other country will not make the world more peaceful unless its neighbors are similarly transformed.

The Bush administration has also argued that other countries are much more likely to support American foreign policy objectives if they are democratic. The basic point that democracies limit the power of rulers has much to be said for it, but it is far from clear how far this will translate into shared foreign policy goals. After all, at bottom, democracy means that a state's policy will at least roughly reflect the objectives and values of the population, and there is no reason to believe that these should be compatible between one country and another. Why would a democratic Iraq share American views on the Arab–Israeli dispute, for example? Would a democratic Iran be a closer ally than the Shah's regime was? If Pakistan were truly democratic, would it oppose Islamic terrorism? In many cases, if other countries become more responsive to public opinion, they will become more anti-American. In the key Arab states of Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, cooperation with the United States could not be sustained if the public had greater influence; the elections in Pakistan in September of 2002 reduced the regime's stability and complicated the efforts to combat al Qaeda, results that would have been magnified had the elections been truly free; in Europe, the public is even more critical of the United States than are the leaders. In the spring of 2004, Paul Bremer declared that "basically

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[44] Quoted in Steven Weisman, "U.S. Muffles Sweeping Call To Democracy In Mideast," *New York Times*, 12 March 2004.

[45] Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

Iraq is on track to realize the kind of Iraq that Iraqis want and that Americans want, which is a democratic Iraq."[46] Leaving aside the unwarranted optimism, the assumption that Iraqis and Americans want the same thing reveals a touching but misplaced faith in universal values and harmony of interests among peoples and therefore among democratic regimes. Indeed, the only possible way for Iraq to be pro-American may be for it to be nondemocratic (although it is likely to end up being both authoritarian and anti-American).[47]

The Shape of Things to Come?

Over eighty years ago, Walter Lippmann famously argued that the public could not act responsibly in politics, and especially in foreign policy, because it was driven by stereotypes and images of the external world that were crude and rigid.[48] There is much to this, but ironically it now applies to large segments of the Republican foreign policy elite more than to the general public. Lippmann's description of how stereotypes do more than conserve our intellectual effort is particularly appropriate and disturbing: "The system of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society. . . . They may not be a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted. In that world people and things have their well-known places, and do certain expected things."[49] Ideologies can provide a comforting way of understanding a complex world and a guide to swift action. But even under the best of circumstances, they are likely to distort, to miss a great deal, and to inhibit adjustment to changing circumstances. When the world is new and confusing, the temptation to rely on stereotypes and ideologies is greatest. But these are exactly the circumstances under which this pattern in most dangerous.

The Bush Doctrine is extraordinarily ambitious and relies heavily on the premise that a state's foreign policy is largely determined by its domestic system. By rejecting the standard international politics argument that the behavior of states is most strongly influenced by their external environment, the Bush

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[46] Quoted in Douglas Jehl, "U.S. Says It Will Move Gingerly Against Sadr," *New York Times*, 7 April 2004. Similarly, in the run-up to the war in Kosovo, General Wesley Clark endorsed the view that the problem was caused by the fact that the Belgrade regime was not a democratic one. Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Conflict* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2002), 128.

[47] Public opinion data in the spring of 2004 was ambivalent but not encouraging: while most Iraqis were glad that Saddam was ousted, said their own lives were better off because of the invasion, and thought that their country would be less safe if Coalition forces left, they viewed those forces as occupiers rather than liberators, thought they should leave immediately, and viewed George Bush unfavorably; accessed at http://www.cnn.com/2004/world/meast/04/28/iraq.poll/iraq/poll.4.28.pdf, 5 May 2004.

[48] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922).

[49] Ibid., 95, 381–382. It is also worth noting that Lippmann's chapter on intelligence argues: "It is no accident that the best diplomatic service in the world is the one in which the divorce between the assembling of knowledge and the control of policy is most perfect."

administration is led to conclude that tyrannies are uniquely dangerous, especially because of the dangers posed by WMD. As the President said in his second inaugural address, "The urgent requirement of our nation's security . . . [is the] ending of tyranny in the world." This means that American vital interest requires not the maintenance of the status quo, but the transformation of world politics, and indeed, of the domestic systems of many countries. This project is more far-reaching than traditional empires that sought only to conquer. Although difficult to achieve, this could be accomplished by superior military power. For the transformation Bush has in mind, superior force is necessary but not sufficient; it can succeed only through the efforts of others. Furthermore, not only must the populations and elites in currently dictatorial regimes undergo democratic transformations, but America's allies must work with it in a wide variety of projects to sustain the political and economic infrastructure of the new world. The unilateralist impulses in American policy are likely to inhibit such cooperation, however.

If the Bush administration overestimates the extent to which it can and needs to make the world democratic, it incorrectly assumes that the American domestic system will provide the steady support that the Doctrine requires. The very American preponderance that makes the Doctrine possible also gives the United States great freedom of action. Although states with great power often find projects that require its exercise,[50] this particular project is not compelled or likely to be supported over the long run by America's inward-looking public opinion and fragmented domestic political system.

Although it is unlikely that the Bush Doctrine can be sustained, future events will, of course, affect its prospects. Most obviously, a great deal depends on developments in Iraq. Although a full analysis is beyond the scope of this article (and beyond my knowledge), as I noted earlier, putting down the insurgency will not automatically solve the political problems that, over the long run, pose a greater challenge to Iraq and to American hopes for it and the region. Even when the violent opposition of the Sunnis comes to an end, the difficulties in creating a stable and tolerant Iraq will remain.

A second uncertainty concerns the war on terror in general and the prospects of another major attack on the United States in particular. It is almost certain that the coming decade will see large terrorist attacks on the West, perhaps with WMD, especially if we put radiological weapons ("dirty bombs") in this category. What is much less predictable is the reaction to this. It is possible that the American public would see an attack as showing the failure of the Bush Doctrine and would call for more attention to homeland defense and less to taxing foreign policy goals. It is also possible that the response would be more preventive strikes and perhaps redoubled efforts to encourage democratic regimes. In either event, we are likely to see heightened restrictions against immigrants as well as restrictions on civil liberties. Although these will not directly affect the fate of the Bush Doctrine, they are likely to reduce America's appeal abroad.

[50] For further discussion, see Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," 379–383.

Turning to what is already clear from events since September 11, the Bush Doctrine and the war in Iraq have weakened Western unity and called into question the potency of deterrence by claiming that the United States could not have contained a nuclear-armed Saddam. I think this belief was incorrect,[51] but because deterrence rests on potential challengers' understanding that the defender is confident of its deterrent threats, the American demonstration of its lack of faith in this instrument will diminish its utility. Even if future administrations adopt a different stance and affirm the role of deterrence, some damage may be permanent.

The largely unilateral overthrow of Saddam has set in motion even more important irreversible changes in relations with allies. Before Bush came to power, the emerging consensus was that the United States was committed to multilateralism.[52] This is not to say that it would never act without the consent of its leading allies, but that on major issues, it would consult fully, listen carefully, and give significant weight to allied views. International institutions, deeply ingrained habits, the sense of shared values and interests, close connections at the bureaucratic levels, public support for this way of proceeding, and the understanding that long-run cooperation was possible only if the allies had faith that the United States would not exploit its superior power position all led to a structure that inhibited American unilateralism. This partial world order, it was argued, served American interests as well as those of its partners, because it induced the latter to cooperate with each other and with the United States, reduced needless frictions, and laid the foundations for prosperity and joint measures to solve common problems. This way of doing business had such deep roots that it could absorb exogenous shocks and the election of new leaders.

Recent events have shown that although the argument may have been correct normatively, it was not correct empirically. It is quite possibly true that it would have been wise for the United States to have continued on the multilateral path, to have maintained a broad coalition, and to have given its allies more influence over the way it fought terrorism. But we can now see that it was wrong to conclude that the international system and U.S. policy had evolved to a point that compelled this approach.

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[51] See Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005), ch. 3.

[52] See, for example, G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); John Gerard Ruggie, *Winning the Peace: America and the New World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); John Steinbrunner, *Principles of Global Security* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2000). See Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 154–163, for a good discussion of the different circumstances under which unilateralism and multilateralism are appropriate; also see John Van Oudenaren, "What Is 'Multilateral'?" *Policy Review* 117 (February–March 2003): 33–47; and John Van Oudenaren, "Unipolar Versus Unilateral, *Policy Review* 124 (April–May 2004): 63–74. For the argument that even in the Cold War, the United States was unilateralist, see Sestanovich, "American Maximalism," and Betts, "Political Support System for American Primacy."

This does not mean that the United States is now firmly set on a new course. Indeed, I do not think that the Bush Doctrine can be sustained. Bush's domestic support rests on the belief that he is making the United States safer, not on an endorsement of a wider transformationist agenda. Especially in the absence of a clear political victory in Iraq, support for assertive hegemony is limited at best. But if Bush is forced to retract, he will not revert to the sort of coalition-building that Clinton favored. Of course there will be a new president elected in 2008, but even if he or she wanted to pick up where Clinton left off, this will not be possible. Although allies would meet the United States more than half-way in their relief that policy had changed, they would realize that the permanence of the new American policy could not be guaranteed. The familiar role of anarchy in limiting the ability of states to bind themselves has been highlighted by Bush's behavior and will not be forgotten.

The United States and others, then, face a difficult task. The collapse of the Bush foreign policy will not leave clear ground on which to build: new policies and forms of cooperation will have to be jury-rigged above the rubble of the recent past. The Bush administration having asserted the right (and the duty) to maintain order and provide what it believes to be collective goods, an American retraction will be greeted with initial relief by many, but it is also likely to produce disorder, unpredictability, and opportunities for others.

Machiavelli famously asked whether it is better to be feared or to be loved. The problem for the United States is that it is likely to be neither. Bush's unilateralism and perceived bellicosity have weakened ties to allies, dissipated much of the sympathy that the United States had garnered after September 11, and convinced many people that America was seeking an empire with little room for their interests or values. It will be very hard for any future administration to regain the territory that has been lost. At best, the policy is a gigantic gamble that a stable and decent regime can be established in Iraq and that this can produce reform in the other countries and a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. In this case, the United States might gain much more support and approval, if not love. But anything less will leave the United States looking neither strong nor benign, and we may find that the only thing worse than a successful hegemon is a failed one. We are headed for a difficult world, one that is not likely to fit any of our ideologies or simple theories.*