

deepening the anti-American sentiments that have in the past—and continue at present—to make members of the lower classes of the Islamic world susceptible to the recruitment efforts of regional and global terrorist organizations. Rice, for example, notes that the Bush administration “rejects the condescending view that freedom will not grow in the soil of the Middle East—or that Muslims somehow do not share in the desire to be free.”²⁶

Diplomatic Prologue to, and Conduct of, the Second Iraq War

Bush’s address to the UN General Assembly and his subsequent release of the NSS set the stage for concurrent, and equally vigorous, domestic and international debates regarding the need to disarm Iraq. Those debates eventually resulted in the passage of two measures: a US Congressional Resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq²⁷ and a UN Security Council Resolution demanding that Saddam readmit and grant unrestricted investigative access to UN inspectors charged with determining the extent to which his regime has disarmed.²⁸ Ultimately, the construction of a coalition to disarm Iraq through the conduct of the Second Iraq War served as a practical test of the doctrine of preemption articulated in the NSS. The purpose of this section is to examine the process through which the United States applied Bush’s NSS to the case of Iraq. It does so by discussing briefly the diplomatic prologue to, and prosecution of, Operation Iraqi Freedom between September 2002 and April 2003.²⁹

In the contexts of Security Council Resolution 687 and 16 subsequent Security Council resolutions—the last of which (Resolution 4112) was passed unanimously on 8 November 2002—the UN demanded that Iraq make a range of behavioral modifications to ensure its re-acceptance as a productive member of the international community.³⁰ Saddam’s regime failed to comply fully with all of these resolutions. In particular, Iraq defied UN mandates by declining to: eliminate its biological, chemical and nuclear WMD developmental programs in an unambiguously verifiable manner; cease its attempts to acquire ballistic missiles with ranges greater than 150 kilometers; renounce all terrorist organizations and refuse to harbor any members of such groups within its borders; return all foreign prisoners seized during its 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Persian Gulf War; and refrain from repressing its domestic population.³¹

To its credit, the Bush administration applied a variety of economic, diplomatic and politico-military tools to the liquidation of Saddam’s regime. The initial stage of the process was rhetorical in nature. It commenced with Bush’s address to the UN General Assembly in September 2002 and continued with his nationally televised speech to the American people from Cincinnati a month later.³² In each case, the President issued stern demands for Iraq to disarm in order to impress upon Saddam and the international community how seriously Washington viewed the matter. However, Bush was also careful to express his willingness to afford the UN an opportunity to achieve that objective peacefully before the United States would consider either the multilateral or unilateral use of force against Iraq. Furthermore, key members of the administration’s national security team—most notably Rice, Powell and Rumsfeld—and also British Prime Minister Tony Blair struck similar tones

in reiterating the administration’s demands between September 2002 and March 2003.

Next, the Bush administration focused on the development of American and international legal measures to justify diplomatic and military action against Iraq. Domestically, Bush worked diligently to secure Congressional authorization of the use of force to disarm Iraq should such action become necessary, which he achieved through the resounding passage of a joint resolution to that end by the House and Senate.³³ Internationally, Powell collaborated with his British, French, Russian and Chinese counterparts on the Security Council to fashion Resolution 4112, which called for Saddam to readmit and cooperate unconditionally with weapons inspectors under the auspices of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) or face “serious consequences.”³⁴ The resolution passed by a 15-0 vote in the Security Council on 8 November 2002 and was agreed to by Iraq six days later.

Throughout the diplomatic process, French President Jacques Chirac was the most vociferous of several foreign leaders to express their unambiguous opposition to the use of military force to disarm Iraq and employed all diplomatic measures at his disposal to block that course of action. For example, although France voted for Resolution 4112, it did so only because that measure did not explicitly sanction the use of force against Iraq. Ultimately, when the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain indicated they would seek a second resolution condoning military action to disarm Saddam’s regime, Chirac responded that “whatever the circumstances, France will vote no,” ensuring that the campaign for any such resolution was stillborn.³⁵

Chirac’s behavior raises a simple question, albeit one that demands a relatively complex answer: why was he so insistent that the United States not remove Saddam from power? In short, there are three reasons, each of which includes both domestic and international components that require more detailed independent explanations. First, France had close public and private economic ties with Saddam’s regime, which it was understandably eager to preserve. Second, France plays host to a growing Muslim population, one whose members were unequivocally opposed to US military action against Iraq and by no means averse to expressing their opposition in violent—and thus socially destabilizing—ways. Third, Chirac perceived the Iraq crisis as an opportunity to revitalize flagging French prestige—both within and outside of Europe—in opposition to American predominance in the post-Cold War international system.

Economically, France had much to lose as a result of the liquidation of Saddam’s regime. At the governmental level, Baghdad is in debt to Paris to the tune of approximately \$8 billion.³⁶ While the sum itself is not substantial, it suggests the potential existence of linkages between Chirac’s administration and the regime in Baghdad that may extend at least peripherally to collusion on the development of WMD. In theory, economic connections between France and Iraq are perhaps even more relevant with respect to the private sector. Most significantly, French oil companies such as TotalFinaElf (TFE) are suspected of negotiating contracts to develop Iraqi oil resources that would enter into force concurrent with the removal of UN economic sanctions against Iraq. While TFE Chairman Thierry Demarest denies signing any such contracts, published reports indicated that the finalization of a deal for TFE to “exploit the huge Majnoon field, with 20 billion barrels of oil, in southern

Iraq, as well as the smaller Nahr Umr field nearby” was all but a formality prior to the outbreak of hostilities.³⁷ Given French opposition to the war, the nascent democratic Iraq is unlikely to treat TFE nearly so favorably as was true of Saddam.

In addition to these economic considerations, Chirac faced equally pressing domestic political concerns over the potentially volatile reaction of Franco-Muslim communities to any governmental support whatsoever for the American-led use of force against Iraq. As a result, Chirac was justifiably concerned over the likelihood if not certainty of domestic instability emanating from the urban housing projects in which most Franco-Islamic communities are situated given past acts of Franco-Muslim defiance ranging from public demonstrations to the commission of terrorist attacks. Yet, while Chirac’s anti-war strategy mollified France’s Muslims in the short term, deeper ethnic and religious divisions are likely to prevail without the development of a more effective governmental strategy to integrate Islamic communities within the societal mainstream over the long term.

Notwithstanding Chirac’s domestic economic and political motivations, his opposition to and attempted obstruction of the Bush administration’s preemptive strategy toward Iraq was, at its core, a product of the traditional French aversion to the expression of American power in the world. During the Cold War, France consistently sought to create independent roles for itself as a hub of opposition to US leadership within Europe and across the developing world. Manifestations of this trend included President Charles de Gaulle’s acquisition of a nuclear *force de frappe* and subsequent withdrawal of France from NATO’s military command structure in 1966. It is not unreasonable to characterize Chirac’s behavior of late in similar terms to that of de Gaulle. Lacking the economic vitality or military capacity to portray France as a legitimate rival to the United States, Chirac attempted to achieve that objective by using the one body in which Paris possesses power relatively equivalent to that wielded by Washington: the UN Security Council. Regrettably, in the process, he may well have damaged the Franco-American relationship to an extent that will require months—and perhaps—years to repair.

Predictably, in the end, Saddam refused to cooperate unambiguously with the weapons inspectors. As a result, the United States collaborated with the United Kingdom—and, to a lesser degree, a range of other allies including Australia and several Eastern and Central European states—to forcibly remove the Iraqi regime from power over objections from the French, as well as the Russians, Chinese and several members of the Arab League. The Americans and British did so by orchestrating a campaign that took just over a month to remove Saddam’s regime between March and April 2003.

The conduct of Operation Iraqi Freedom itself was relatively painless militarily and politically. The immediate aftermath of the fall of Baghdad, by contrast, was somewhat more problematic. The initial security challenges faced by coalition forces in the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad in April 2003 grew primarily out of the desire of many Iraqis to strike out against members of Saddam’s Baath Party by looting the dictator’s palaces and the government ministries formerly administered by his minions. And, regrettably, the subsequent inability or unwillingness of the United States and its coalition partners to take decisive action to prevent the looting contributed to a sense

that the liberators had lost control of the situation. The resulting instability led to widespread criticism of the Bush administration such as that expressed by Peter Galbraith, a former American Ambassador to Croatia in testimony before Congress in June 2003: “When the United States entered Baghdad on April 9, it entered a city largely undamaged by a carefully executed military campaign. However, in the three weeks following the US takeover, unchecked looting effectively gutted every important public institution in the city—with the notable exception of the oil ministry.”³⁸

A Strategy to Transform the Greater Middle East

During the Cold War, most dangers the United States had to counter grew out of its adversarial relationship with the Soviet Union. Since the end of that bipolar struggle, by contrast, American presidents have had to respond to challenges related to the emergence of “failing” and “failed states” that threaten military security, economic vitality and political stability in regions deemed vital to the interests of the United States and its allies. These entities have been of particular concern to American policymakers in the 1990s and 2000s. The Clinton and Bush administrations both intervened militarily in states that could be defined as either “failing” or “failed” in terms of governmental maintenance of, control over, or humane treatment of, their populations. The former took action in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 and the latter in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. In each case, the use of force was followed by the conduct of post-conflict operations that have since been defined as “nation building” endeavors.

Nation building is, by no means, a new concept. It was, for example, employed effectively in the transformation of Germany and Japan from dictatorships to democracies in the aftermath of World War II. However, both the frequency of the application of nation building operations and the threats such projects are designed to counter have changed markedly over the past decade. The primary purpose of the Clinton administration’s participation in nation building operations in the Balkans was to ensure political stability in a region adjacent to the borders of member states of the NATO and EU. The Bush administration, on the other hand, has supported the reconstruction and democratization of Afghanistan and played the lead role in nation-building operations in Iraq as a means to reduce the threats posed to US interests by terrorists and their sponsors in two ways: first, by replacing regimes that supported Al Qaeda either directly or indirectly; and, second, by improving the standard of living of, and affording political freedom to, the people of the Greater Middle East.

Above all, the physical and economic reconstruction and political liberalization of Iraq is absolutely indispensable to the broader transformation of the Islamic world. That much Bush and his advisors have emphasized repeatedly since the elimination of Saddam’s regime in April 2003 and commencement of reconstruction operations the ensuing month. In April 2004, for instance, Bush stressed that “a free Iraq will stand as an example to reformers across the Middle East. A free Iraq will show that America is on the side of Muslims who wish to live in peace, as we have already shown in Kuwait [by way of the conduct of the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War] and Kosovo, Bosnia

and Afghanistan. A free Iraq will confirm to a watching world that America's word, once given, can be relied upon, even in the toughest of times."³⁹

Bush's remarks opened a nationally televised press conference addressing the many challenges associated with nation building in Iraq. The president's comments were demonstrative of two underlying points. First, Bush recognized at that juncture that the transformation of Iraq continued to present economic, military and political roadblocks that would take years, rather than weeks or months to overcome. Second, he emphasized the importance of seeing the Iraqi nation-building project through to completion, implying that subsequent administrations should maintain the commitment to the broader liberalization and democratization of the Greater Middle East over the long term. In particular, he concluded that

America's commitment to freedom in Iraq is consistent with our ideals, and required by our interests. Iraq will either be a peaceful, democratic country, or it will again be a source of violence, a haven for terror and a threat to America and to the world. By helping to secure a free Iraq, Americans serving in that country are protecting their fellow citizens. Our nation is grateful to them all and to their families. ... Above all, the defeat of violence and terror in Iraq is vital to the defeat of violence and terror elsewhere; and vital, therefore, to the safety of the American people. Now is the time and Iraq is the place, in which the enemies of the civilized world are testing the will of the civilized world. We must not waver.⁴⁰

At the core of insurgent efforts to undermine nation-building operations in Iraq is the fear that the United States will establish an enduring free market economy and representative government there. That outcome could eventually lead to two developments that dictatorial regimes and terrorist groups alike would abhor: an improved standard of living for members of the lower classes of society; and the creation of a political atmosphere in which individuals are free to elect and, if they choose, criticize those in power. With Iraq as a model, other countries possessing comparably autocratic characteristics to those of Saddam's former regime (examples range from Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia and Iran to more secular oriented states like Egypt and Syria) could be the next candidates for economic and political transformation.

Of those states, Iran in particular has the potential to pose significant threats to US interests in the Persian Gulf in the future. There were, for example, a variety of factors behind Bush's characterization of Iran as a member of the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address.⁴¹ First, Tehran is in the process of acquiring and refining WMD and the means to deliver them to targets throughout the Greater Middle East. Notwithstanding its status as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran is developing a series of nominal civilian reactors that could provide the fissile materials necessary to construct atomic weaponry. In addition, Washington suspects Iran has broken its obligations under the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention and may have the capacity to deliver missiles armed with WMD to the continental United States by 2015.⁴² Second, while Iran has not been linked directly to the events of 9/11, it remains on the Department of State's list

of sponsors of terrorism and is suspected of complicity in the June 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers.⁴³ Third, Tehran continues to undermine the fleeting Israeli-Palestinian peace process by providing economic, military and political support to terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad.⁴⁴ As Rice has asserted, "Iranian behavior puts it squarely in the 'axis of evil'—whether it is weapons of mass destruction or terrorism or any of those things. It's a complicated situation, but I think the behavior speaks for itself."⁴⁵

American efforts to promote democratic change in Iraq scare not only the Iranians, but also the leaders of terrorist organizations including, but not limited to, Al Qaeda. There are two reasons why. First, those groups thrive on discontent, if not outright desperation, to recruit members willing to sacrifice their lives to battle the adversaries they blame for the dearth of economic growth and political freedom prevalent across much of the Arab world. One such adversary (the United States) is perceived by many Muslims to be responsible for the majority of these shortcomings. Should Bush—or, for that matter, any other American president—manage to use a successful transformation of Iraq to start the engine of reform at the broader regional level, the pool of terrorist recruits would decrease substantially. Second, while bin Laden and his ilk also seek the elimination of the present governments in control of states throughout the Middle East, they would prefer that those changes come under their auspices. That would, of course, allow them to take control and install equally repressive regimes, which they could then administer in a style similar to that of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The establishment of representative democracies, by contrast, would encourage the free expression of dissent to prevent the development of any type of autocracy, whether Islamic or secular in character.

Assuming that the democratization of the Greater Middle East is a realistic long-term objective, a topic on which there is considerable debate, the Bush administration deserves credit for taking the initial step toward its achievement. However, it is also essential to recognize that the pursuit of such a revolutionary transformation will entail substantial costs and require a commitment that lasts for decades rather than years. Most significantly, those costs will grow out of the myriad challenges associated with the transformation Bush has suggested the United States should pursue. Such challenges are primarily ethnic and religious in orientation, each set of which is addressed briefly below.

Broadly articulated ethnic differences between groups tend to complicate reconstruction efforts at the national level, most notably as pertains to the creation and subsequent administration of economic and financial institutions in a given domestic environment. When individuals of one ethnic persuasion are appointed to leadership positions in such institutions, their counterparts from other groups understandably demand equitable treatment that, while morally just in theory, may slow the recovery process in practice. The reluctance of members of a particular ethnic group to accept advice from, and thus place their trust in, foreigners, is equally problematic. When those foreigners represent institutions perceived to be in business simply to do the bidding to the United States, earning that trust can be exceedingly difficult within the developing world generally and the Greater Middle East specifically.

Challenges related to linguistic differences and intra-ethnic familial and tribal rivalries typically prove especially daunting at the local level. Even if, for instance, one ethnic group is represented on a transitional economic or political body at the national level, it is by no means certain that decisions taken by that entity will be accepted by the leaders of tribes or villages thousands of miles from the capital. And, in those cases where local leaders agree to help administer humanitarian aid in an area under their control, communications are not always smooth between starving civilians and the foreign soldiers or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers distributing foodstuffs.

Similarly, religious impediments to the economic and financial aspects of nation building manifest themselves in interactions among individuals, states and institutions at several different levels. Inter- and intra-denominational differences, for instance, are often evident locally and nationally, as well as regionally and globally. Domestically, inter- and intra-denominational religious disputes have the potential to undermine both the political and economic aspects of reconstruction projects. Some international religious impediments to nation building grow out of global issues (support from a small but violent minority of Muslims for transnational terrorist organizations, as evidenced by efforts to sabotage reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, is one such example): Others are the result of the use of NGOs to spread one faith (most often Christianity or Islam) in a state or region where the vast majority of the inhabitants already adhere to another.

Putting forward the effort to overcome these hurdles—and accepting the requisite economic, military and political costs that accumulate along the way—will provide an opportunity to alter the broader relationship between Islam and the West in an equally favorable manner. The United States has embraced comparably daunting challenges in the past, most notably its commitment in the aftermath of World War II to the idea of a Europe whole and free. That project is now nearly 60 years old and gradually nearing completion with the EU and NATO both moving forward with their most recent enlargement processes in 2004. Lacking the economic, military and political sacrifices the Americans and Western Europeans made during the Cold War, the European continent, too, might still lack the freedoms the Bush administration now hopes to spread to the Greater Middle East.

Connecting the Dots: Iraq, Al Qaeda and the War on Terrorism

When Bush took office, he was left to build on the mixed results recorded by the Clinton administration vis-à-vis its policies toward Al Qaeda and that group's state sponsors. Rather than pressure the Taliban, which harbored bin Laden in Afghanistan from 1996-2001, diplomatically or consider the deployment of military forces in that context, Clinton chose to pursue bin Laden primarily through domestic law enforcement bodies and weaken Al Qaeda to the limited extent possible through a single flurry of cruise missile strikes.⁴⁶ As former Clinton aide Dick Morris contends, "All our [present] terrorist problems were born during the Clinton years. It was during

his eight years in office that [Al] Qaeda began its campaign of bombing and destruction aimed at the United States. ... Bill Clinton and his advisors were alerted to the group's power and intentions by these attacks. But they did nothing to stop [Al] Qaeda from building up its resources for the big blow on 9/11."⁴⁷

Regrettably, the Bush administration's initial approach to the issue of Al Qaeda proved no more robust than Clinton's as the President and his advisors worked to craft an effective foreign and security policy blueprint in the weeks and months preceding the events of 9/11. Prior to assuming office, Bush joined Cheney and Rice at a briefing conducted by Clinton's third Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet. During the briefing, Tenet warned all three that bin Laden represented a "tremendous threat" to American interests at home and abroad, one that was "immediate."⁴⁸ Over the ensuing months, the CIA issued several more warnings, including 34 communications intercepts in the summer of 2001 indicating that Al Qaeda was planning a major operation against the United States by issuing subtly coded statements such as "Zero hour is tomorrow" or "Something spectacular is coming."⁴⁹

The CIA's warnings stirred the Bush administration to action, albeit of a sort that had not extended beyond the planning stage when Al Qaeda launched its attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Rice, for example, was in the process of preparing a National Security Directive on the issue on September 10, one that built on lower-level National Security Council discussions on the construction of a strategy to eliminate Al Qaeda.⁵⁰ That planning, of course, shifted rapidly into concrete military action against both Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the aftermath of 9/11. And the conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom turned out to be just the initial battle in the Bush administration's conduct of a broader war against transnational terrorist groups and their state sponsors. Ultimately, that war resulted in the elimination of Saddam's regime as well.

While no member of the Bush administration has ever argued publicly that Iraq was directly involved in either the planning or conduct of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, it is possible to construct a circumstantial case that suggests the existence of precisely such a linkage.⁵¹ It is perhaps most appropriate to begin articulating that case with an examination of Saddam's own behavior the morning of the attacks and over the ensuing days. In the hours prior to Al Qaeda's strikes in New York and Washington, Iraq placed its military forces on their highest level of alert since the outbreak of the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. Saddam himself retreated into the depths of one of his fortified bunkers in Tikrit, the northern Iraqi city from which he first emerged as a powerful figure in the Baath Party.⁵² Nor did Saddam's regime indicate any sign of even token disapproval of the attacks. To the contrary, it issued a statement claiming that the United States deserved the attacks.⁵³

There are, of course, at least two contrasting explanations for Iraq's behavior concurrent with, and in the aftermath of, the events of 9/11. One, the most conservative of the two, is that Saddam approved of, but was not involved in, the attacks and nonetheless figured he would be a convenient target for retaliatory strikes by the United States given the consistently adversarial nature of the relationship between Washington and Baghdad from 1990-2001. Another, for which there is limited—albeit by no means definitive—evidence, is that Iraq was directly involved in

the planning of the assaults and training of at least some of those Al Qaeda operatives who carried them out. Con Coughlin, who has written one of the more comprehensive recent biographies on Saddam, sums up these alternate explanations nicely, noting that the "intense secrecy and security that surrounded Saddam's every move meant it was impossible to say for sure why the Iraqi leader had placed his country on high alert and retreated to a bombproof shelter, but the timing alone was sufficient to raise suspicions."⁵⁴

Three pieces of evidence in particular indicate that Iraq may indeed have played a role in the 9/11 attacks. First, two Iraqi defectors who were debriefed by Western intelligence officials in late 2001 claimed that Iraq had established a terrorist training camp at the Salman Pak military base south of Baghdad for use in training groups of Islamic fighters from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt. Furthermore, the camp's features included an old Boeing 707, which was employed to "teach the recruits how to hijack a plane using only their bare hands or knives, techniques similar to those used by the September 11 hijackers."⁵⁵ Second, the transitory Iraqi coalition government established after the elimination of Saddam's regime in the context of the Second Iraq War has produced a memo it claims documents a visit by 9/11 ring leader Mohammed Atta to that Salman Pak training camp in July 2001.⁵⁶ Third, Czech officials have asserted repeatedly that Atta met with Iraqi intelligence agent Ahmed al-Ani in Prague several times in 2000 and 2001.⁵⁷ While these pieces of evidence are circumstantial at best and have never been cited publicly by Bush administration officials, they certainly raise suspicions worthy of at least some consideration, particularly considering both Saddam's enmity toward the United States and his long history of support for terrorist organizations over the years.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Bush Administration's Gulf Policies

All presidential administrations exhibit both strengths and weaknesses in developing and implementing their foreign and security policies, which typically become apparent in hindsight, once the consequences of those policies have manifested themselves at home as well as abroad. With respect to the Bush administration, an assessment of such strengths and weaknesses is best articulated contextually through examinations of its policymaking toward Iraq as pertains to the US domestic, Greater Middle Eastern and global levels.

US Domestic Level

When assessed in terms of their implications at the domestic level, the strengths of the Bush administration's policies toward the Gulf are threefold. First, by using all available means to confront both Iraq and Al Qaeda, the administration has reduced appreciably the collective threats they pose to the United States. In particular, irrespective of the extent of Iraq's WMD programs in the past,⁵⁸ the liquidation of Saddam's regime has mitigated the potential for the use of such munitions against American citizens in the future. While terrorists generally and Al Qaeda members specifically continue to stage attacks designed to destabilize the new Iraq, bin Laden

has failed to orchestrate an effective assault on US soil since the events of 9/11. For that alone, Bush is to be commended. Second, the prosecution of Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrated to the American public that the United States continues to possess the world's most powerful military forces and thus retains the capacity to back its rhetorical warnings to adversaries with the decisive use of force when necessary. Third, to his credit, Bush was willing to take a political risk in confronting Saddam, one that, while enhancing American security at home, has also resulted in a significant drop in his public approval ratings as a result of the casualties suffered by US servicemen in 2003 and 2004 in Iraq. Regrettably, a substantial bloc of the American electorate simply does not recognize that reducing the threat to the US population overall often entails sacrifices by many of its members.

Bush's Gulf policies also have two weaknesses at the domestic level. First, the administration underestimated the challenges associated with stabilizing Iraq in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saddam's regime and maintaining a secure environment therein over the ensuing weeks and months of military occupation. As a result, Bush has faced greater criticism from the American public than would have otherwise been the case. Second, complicating matters further, a postwar investigation by the US Senate Intelligence Committee determined that the CIA overestimated the extent of Saddam's biological, chemical and nuclear weapons developmental programs prior to the conduct of the war against Iraq. Specifically, the committee found that most of the "judgments in the [CIA's October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate] either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting."⁵⁹ That assessment appears sound given that American forces have yet to uncover any substantial WMD stockpiles in Iraq. And, although Bush did not base the case for war against Saddam solely on the WMD issue, the failure to find any such munitions has certainly hurt the president politically—and deservedly so.

Greater Middle Eastern Level

As pertains to the Greater Middle East, the fundamental strengths of the Bush administration's policies toward the Persian Gulf are threefold. First, the elimination of Saddam's regime represented a useful a point of departure for the eventual liberalization and democratization of Iraq, an outcome that, if achieved, will demonstrate the potential for a broader regional transformation. Any systemic transformation must begin somewhere. In light of Saddam's history of aggression and repression of his people, Iraq was clearly an appropriate place to begin this one. Second, Saddam's fall and subsequent capture served as a lesson to other Arab leaders—namely that absent behavioral changes vis-à-vis the development of WMD and sponsorship of terrorist organizations, they could be next in line for regime change. Third, in launching nation-building operations in Iraq, the American-led coalition presented a challenge to those opposed to the liberal democratic values the West represents. Terrorist groups including, but not limited to, Al Qaeda, responded to that challenge by traveling to Iraq to wage war against coalition forces and their allies. Consequently, the front in the war on terrorism is now in Iraq rather than the United States or elsewhere in the West. That is advantageous to America, albeit only so long as it

maintains an unambiguous commitment to the security and stability of the nascent new Iraq.

However, there are also two weaknesses in the Bush administration's approach. First, while the administration did an excellent job prosecuting Operation Enduring Freedom, it did not plan thoroughly enough for the occupation of Iraq and conduct of nation-building operations in that context. Most significantly, the United States did not initially anticipate the difficulty of creating and maintaining a secure environment in Iraq. Consequently, progress in the reconstruction and democratization of that state has not proceeded as quickly as either the coalition, or the Iraqis themselves, would have liked. Second, the difficulty in achieving such progress has led to criticism of the United States and its coalition partners both within, and outside of, Iraq. The criticism, in turn, has already—and will likely continue to—undermine other American policies toward the Greater Middle East, most notably so with respect to the troubled Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Global Level

The most effective means to assess the ramifications of the Bush administration's policies at the global level is to focus on the most wide-ranging statement articulating its strategic vision: the September 2002 NSS. That strategy has six strengths. First, Bush's NSS articulates an innovative approach in an incisive manner, avoiding the myriad diplomatic ambiguities of the 1999 Clinton NSS and is thus intelligible to a considerably broader American audience. In particular, the latter leaves no doubt that the war on terrorism is central to American national security, but specifies a range of interconnected economic, military and political tools it intends to use in waging that conflict over the short, medium and long terms. Second, Bush's NSS emphasizes that the United States will act to preempt threats to its interests rather than react to such dangers after the fact. This is an extraordinarily necessary adjustment in light of the events of 9/11. To deem the attacks a law enforcement matter, conduct an investigation and try those perpetrators eventually captured in a domestic court as the Clinton administration did following the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing would have been politically untenable and practically counterproductive after the 2001 strikes. Such a process would have done little to weaken Al Qaeda's capacity to plan and carry out an equally, if not more, devastating attack in the future.

Third, Bush's NSS expresses the administration's prudential willingness to strike a balance between multilateral and unilateral action in confronting terrorists and their state sponsors. In particular, Bush notes pledges in the NSS that the United States will act multilaterally whenever possible and unilaterally only if absolutely necessary. In its efforts to limit—and eventually eliminate—the threats posed to American interests by Al Qaeda, the United States has received support from its European, Middle Eastern and Central, South and Far East Asian allies that includes intelligence sharing, law enforcement cooperation, the deployment of military forces and leadership of nation-building operations in states ranging geographically from Iraq to the Philippines. In

addition, although the Bush administration did not secure a clear UN mandate to eliminate Saddam's regime through the conduct of the Second Iraq War, it attempted to acquire Security Council support repeatedly and lobbied successfully for the passage of Resolution 1441.

Fourth, Bush's NSS addresses soft as well as hard security issues and justifies its doctrine of preemption in accordance with established international legal norms. It explains, for example, that "for centuries, international law recognized that nations need not suffer an attack before they can lawfully take action to defend themselves against forces that present an imminent danger of attack." It then adds a necessary caveat that relates to the changing nature of the dangers presented by non-state actors in the 2000s, arguing that "the greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack."⁶⁰

Fifth, Bush's NSS prioritizes American security interests geographically, placing an emphasis on the Greater Middle East relative to other regions of the world—one that parallels America's commitment to the war on terrorist groups and their state sponsors broadly, and Iraqi and broader Greater Middle Eastern stabilization and democratization in particular. That commitment is evident in initiatives including, but not limited to, ongoing reconstruction operations in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the promulgation of a "Road Map" designed to achieve the eventual resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What is perhaps most significant of each of these initiatives is their multilateral nature. The United States, for example, has successfully lobbied its NATO allies to take the lead in the reconstruction of Afghanistan while it continues to focus on the search for bin Laden and liquidation of Al Qaeda and Taliban loyalists who remain entrenched in the hinterlands of that state. Similarly, the "Road Map" was drafted by a state/institutional quartet composed of the United States, Russia, the UN and the EU.

Sixth, Bush's NSS touches on the need for political reforms that would favor citizens at the expense of the repressive regimes—some aligned with the United States—that are the rule rather than the exception across the Arab world. More pointedly, since releasing its strategy, the Bush administration has asserted consistently that the Greater Middle East is both suitable for, and deserving of, the development of institutions based on free market economic and liberal democratic political principles.

In addition to its many strengths, Bush's NSS has two significant weaknesses. First, it appears to make a somewhat ethnocentric—and not necessarily accurate—assumption that its allies will acquiesce in, if not welcome, the Bush administration's attempts to defend, preserve and extend peace under American auspices. That assumption was at least somewhat inaccurate, as evidenced by the difficulty Bush had in building a diverse coalition to confront Saddam via the conduct of the Second Iraq War. The principal reason why is that, along with a sense of angst over their inability to prevent the United States from taking whatever action it deems appropriate to safeguard its national interests, those very interests, in some cases, conflict with the aims of American allies and adversaries alike. In the Middle East, for example, it should have come as less of a surprise to the Bush administration than was the case that authoritarian leaders in

places such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt would frown on a vision of long-term democratization that would ultimately reduce their own power at best and cause their regimes to fall at worst.

Second, Bush's NSS does not fully acknowledge the extent to which concomitantly de-emphasizing the low politics of the environment (still a high-priority issue in many Western European capitals) and pressing for the forcible disarmament of states such as Iraq, Iran and North Korea will foster serious discord in transatlantic relations. In short, the Bush administration did not strike a particularly conciliatory tone in the transatlantic relationship broadly or in Franco-American and German-American relations specifically during the months preceding the 9/11 attacks. While the resultant conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom restored a measure of solidarity in the transatlantic relationship, that goodwill quickly dissipated in the wake of Bush's unveiling of the NSS. The subsequent diplomatic prologue to, and prosecution of, Operation Iraqi Freedom deepened existing divisions across the Atlantic and opened new ones within Europe between the anti-war French and Germans on one hand and the pro-war British, Spanish, Italian and Polish governments on the other. Many of those differences would still have existed even had the Bush administration struck a more conciliatory tone with the French and Germans among others over the first eight months of 2001. However, that course of action may have muted their public expression to an extent during the diplomatic encounters that preceded the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Conclusions

All leaders face a variety of crises and challenges during their tenures. Ultimately, the differences in the gravity of such developments and the manner in which a given leader responds determine how history will judge that individual. The most significant crisis Bush has had to confront to date—the 9/11 attacks—was as grave as any single challenge faced by any of his predecessors in the White House. The president's leadership in the aftermath of that crisis and his management of the subsequent war against Al Qaeda and Taliban forces within and beyond Afghanistan were laudable. The Bush administration's NSS represented a logical continuation of its response to the events of 9/11, one that acknowledged the need to preempt threats to American interests at home and abroad by confronting terrorist organizations and their state sponsors. The rationale for the administration's security strategy remains sound, and its legal basis—that of self-defense—just under established principles of international behavior. The failure to take action while threats to the security of the United States mount, on the other hand, would be indefensible.

The greatest danger to American interests at present is that posed by the potential acquisition of nuclear, biological or chemical WMD by terrorist groups and the subsequent use of such munitions against targets within and beyond the continental United States. Iraq clearly had the potential to present precisely that type of threat by transferring WMD to regional and global terrorist groups. In particular, Saddam's

repeated violations of UN resolutions designed to curtail his WMD developmental programs, his proven willingness to use such munitions against his domestic and international adversaries, and his support for terrorist organizations rendered Iraq a legitimate target for regime change. Consequently, Bush chose correctly to demand that Iraq disarm and attempted to do so under the multilateral auspices of the UN rather than on an unambiguously unilateral basis.

In the end, notwithstanding the UN's noble intentions to eliminate Iraq's WMD programs by way of weapons inspections carried out by the UNMOVIC, the United States had no choice but to remove Saddam from power through the use of military force in order to ensure that he fully dismantle his WMD programs and cease supporting terrorist organizations. However, the benefits of that action will clearly exceed its costs, but only so long as Washington maintains a long-term commitment to democratic and economic progress in Iraq and the Greater Middle East. That commitment should be characterized by a continued American willingness to strike a balance between Western secular governmental principles and Islamic theology in facilitating the development of a representative Iraqi government that serves the political and religious interests of all of its citizens.

As was true of George H.W. Bush and Clinton, the policies George W. Bush has developed and implemented in the Persian Gulf entail costs and benefits for the United States over both the short and long terms. Assessing those costs and benefits, in turn, is necessary to determine the extent to which one should deem the administration's actions effective or ineffective when considered in historical perspective. As a result, the chapter closes with precisely such an assessment.

The short-term costs of the Bush administration's policies toward the Gulf are fourfold. First, the financial and military burdens associated with the prosecution of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the subsequent conduct of nation-building operations in Iraq have been substantial. Collectively, in excess of 1,000 US servicemen had died and more than 6,000 had been wounded in operations in Iraq by mid-September 2004, with the vast majority of those casualties occurring since 1 May 2003.⁶¹ In addition, the administration's commitments in Iraq have entailed significant economic losses. This is the case in large part because the United States failed to secure either political support—or financial contributions—from nearly so wide a range of coalition partners in the run-up to the Second Iraq War as was the case with respect to the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. Thus far, Washington has already spent, or allocated, in excess of \$100 billion on the reconstruction and democratization of Iraq. And the tab is likely to continue to rise considerably in the future.

Second, politically, the credibility of the United States is at stake on two levels. Bush has consistently promised to replace Saddam's autocratic regime with enduring democratic institutions, irrespective of the economic and physical costs (in dollars and lives, respectively). He has also pledged to achieve that objective with—or without—economic and military assistance from US allies and the broader international community. Breaking either of those promises would undermine Washington's credibility at home and abroad—and, perhaps, appear as a sign of weakness in the war