



The American Presidency: George W Bush Professor Sir Vernon Bogdanor FBA CBE

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This is the last of the lectures on American Presidents, and I have to begin with a confession, that this has been by far the most difficult one to prepare, not only, I think, because George Bush is so very recent, but also because he is so controversial.

George Bush faced three crises of monumental proportions, which would perhaps occur together not more than once in a century. The first, as we all know, was the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States; the second was what is perhaps the greatest natural disaster in American history: Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, in New Orleans, Louisiana and Florida; and thirdly, a financial crisis worse than anything America has seen since the Great Depression. These were three pivotal moments in American history. If you think, as most people in Britain certainly do, that Bush was not a very good President, you could try and excuse that by saying that he was unlucky in the time that he occupied the White House, because these were very difficult and challenging crises.

Of course, the jury is still out on many of the policies that he followed abroad - with regards to Afghanistan and Iraq, for instance - just as the jury was still out with regards to Vietnam when Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Also perhaps, on some of his domestic policies, the jury is still out.

He left as one of the most unpopular Presidents in American history, although not as unpopular as Harry Truman, who left in 1953 with just 22% support. He recovered in the polls later on, and people now see him as a much greater President than was seen at the time. Bush was perhaps unique in that he was not only very unpopular in America but unpopular everywhere else as well. Indeed, I think there have not been polls taken, but I am sure that if you took a poll in Europe, he would turn out to have been the most unpopular President America has had since the War, unpopularity amounting, in some circles, to a visceral hatred of him.

The European view of Bush is perhaps well summed up by a Labour MP, Gerald Kaufman, who said: 'Bush, himself the most intellectually backward American President of my political lifetime, surrounded himself by advisors whose bellicosity is exceeded only by their political, military, and diplomatic illiteracy.' The view that Bush is a fool was held by Gerald Kaufman, as you can see from that quotation, but also by many people in America. One headline in America, while he was President, read: 'President Fails in Shoe Tying Bid'. Another headline was: 'American Held Hostage: Day 16 of President's head stuck in banister'. Of the ticket of Bush and Cheney in 2000, one American comedian called it the 'Withered of Oz ticket: one needs a brain; the other needs a heart'.

I think that is all wrong. I believe that, whatever one thinks of Bush, he was not a fool, whether you agree with his views or not, and he had perhaps the advantage, as Ronald Reagan had, and Eisenhower had, of being greatly under-estimated. I think he was not a fool. When he was unpopular, in his second term, Bush reminded people that historians were still evaluating the term in office of the very first President

named George, namely George Washington, and he said, 'By the time they come to a verdict on my presidency, it won't be for 100 years' time, none of us will be here then, so why are we worrying about the opinion polls?' This lecture will not, I think, change anyone's mind about George Bush, and my aim is not necessarily to praise or condemn, but to try and analyse his presidency.

He is a very difficult man to understand, precisely because he is so unlike any British politician we have seen, except possibly, a very odd comparison you may think, Mr Gladstone in the 19th Century. Perhaps the nearest 20th Century Prime Minister is Blair, who was clearly strongly motivated by religion, though Alistair Campbell, very famously, said once, 'We don't do God.' Well, Bush did do God, and he very ostentatiously did God, and that relates to events in his life, and I think one cannot understand Bush unless one considers those events, but it is very unlike anything that would affect anyone in this country.

He was born in 1946 into the American aristocracy, or the nearest America has to an aristocracy. His grandfather was Prescott Bush, a Republican Senator for Connecticut, and his father was George Bush, who was to become President. His mother was descended from another President, a 19th Century President, Franklin Pierce. But despite, or perhaps because of, this glorious background, the young Bush was a ne'er-do-well, and for the first forty years of his life, as he himself admitted, a complete failure. His father, the older George Bush, had been enormously successful at everything he had done: he'd had a successful career in the services in the War, for which he had been decorated; he had been a successful athlete in Yale; he had been a successful businessman in the oil industry; he had been a successful diplomat; he was a successful politician. In contrast, the younger Bush failed at everything he did. He scraped into Yale, no doubt due to his father's position, but he did not get into any athletics team there, he certainly did not shine academically - he was, as he says himself, a C-grade student. He tried, after that, to get into the University of Texas Law School, but was turned down because of his poor grades, but he did manage to get into Harvard Business School. He is, incidentally, the first President, and the only President so far, to have an MBA in the United States. But at Harvard Business School, as he says himself, he was not what was called a grade-grubber. He was not interested in that, but nor was he intimidated by the ambience of Harvard. He took it in his stride. One lecturer, roughly the same age as him, was very surprised to come into class one day and find Bush, instead of studying his books, throwing paper aeroplanes about. He said, at Harvard, that he '...enjoyed the four Bs: beer, bourdon, benedictine, and brandy' and he had a wonderfully enjoyable and drunken life, and no one ever thought that he would be a figure of any significance of any kind.

However, in one sign of his later success, he was enormously popular. He made many friends, people liked him, and he said, later on, he did not study books, he studied people. Another sign of his future was that he became very friendly with a young black boy who had lost his parents in the inner city in Boston. He befriended him and through him came to some understanding of inner city problems and problems of ethnic minorities. But still, he made no particular impact at Harvard.

He went back to Texas, and, in 1978, he ran for Congress and was defeated. He then went into the oil business, where he did very badly and lost millions, and had to be rescued by his father's friends. After that, his drinking became harder still, and he became, in effect, an alcoholic, but he suddenly stopped drinking in 1986, and he explained that - and, as I say, this is a very un-English thing to have done - at a meeting of religious leaders in the White House in 2002, when he asked them to pray for him. He began every Cabinet meeting with a prayer and in this instance he asked them to pray for him because, as he said, 'You know, I had a drinking problem. Right now, I should be in a bar in Texas, not the Oval Office. There is only one reason that I am in the Oval Office and not a bar. I found faith. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer.' That is clearly what he believed, and he spoke about that very frequently. He was once asked which political philosopher had most influenced him and he said Jesus Christ.

His fortunes then took a turn for the better, and he stood for the Governorship of Texas in 1994, which he won, defeating a Democrat in what had, until then, seemed to be a Democrat state, and was re-elected in 1998, which made him a strong candidate for the presidency in the year 2000.

He gained the Republican nomination in the year 2000, and fought Al Gore, the sitting Vice-President. In terms of votes, he lost to Gore. He was half a million votes behind, but as you know, American elections are not decided by the number of votes but by the electoral college in the states, that is, as in a federal system. It had happened three times before that a President who was second in terms of votes had won the White House. In case anyone's interested in this esoteric fact - you might be on Mastermind some day, you never know - the three are John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford Hayes in 1876, and Benjamin Harrison in 1888.

The key to the election lay in the disputed state of Florida, where the Democrats alleged that some votes had been wrongly counted, so the so-called hanging chads, that people who had intended to vote for Gore had actually voted for someone else because the ballot paper was too complex to easily understand or to punch the holes. This went through the courts to the Supreme Court, which eventually decided, by a five to four vote, that they could not re-count the votes in Florida, part of the argument being, if they re-counted the votes there, they would have to re-count the votes in other states as well, and that might lead to other results. But it was a five to four vote, so it was a very narrow vote, and it was odd in a way because the Democrats were arguing for states' rights, that the votes should be re-counted in the states, and the Republicans were arguing against that, which was the reversal of the usual position. Broadly speaking, the five judges who veered towards the Republicans came out in favour of not re-counting the votes, and the four judges who veered to the Democrats said that they should be re-counted. So that perhaps casts some doubt on the question of neutrality of law in these circumstances.

But regardless, Americans, Gore included, remarkably accepted the legitimacy of that result, and so Bush became President. We think of it as the closest election in American history, but it was only close because Bush won it. If Gore had won, he was a half a million votes ahead. It was a larger majority than Kennedy won over Nixon in 1960. If Gore had won the election, if those votes had been re-counted, we would not say it was a close election; we would say it was quite a reasonable victory. Analyses of the vote showed that - and again, this is very different from Britain - that the key factors determining the vote, there were two of them: first was religious observance, that Bush won by 17% amongst those who attended church every week, but Gore won by 29% amongst those who never went to church at all; and Bush won by 15% amongst married people with children, but Gore won by 19% amongst women working outside home. So it is clear, it is not so much sociological or economic division, or an ethnic division, but a cultural division. It is part of what people call in America 'culture wars', that there are two Americas, and Bush represented the more conservative and religious America. As I say, it is very difficult for us to understand that, because, although there are obviously many religious people in Britain, religion does not play a part in politics, outside Northern Ireland, and people, on the whole, keep their religious views to themselves. I think one or two people did find Blair outlandish when he began to speak about religion, but it was nowhere near as much as Bush did in America.

But at any rate, Bush had a slim mandate. In the Senate, it was divided equally 50:50, so it depended on the casting vote of the Vice President, Cheney, but even that went wrong, because, in 2002, one of the Republican Senators switched to the Democrats, which gave the Democrats a majority in the Senate, so Bush did not even have that, though later in 2002, he won a majority in the Mid-Term Elections.

I think one can understand his presidency in terms of three different phases. The first phase was the first nine months before 9/11. The basic themes of Bush's presidency, in that first phase, you will be surprised to hear, are restraint in domestic policy and reticence in foreign policy.

Bush called himself a compassionate conservative, and that was a wise thing to call himself because his base was conservative, but if he was going to win the next election in 2004, he needed to win more people than were in the base, so he needed the compassionate part to win those who had not voted for him in 2000, and therefore he could not afford to be, even if he had wished to be, too radical or to give too much to his conservative base, lest he frighten off those in the centre.

He, on many occasions, said that he wanted to be the disciple of Ronald Reagan, who had also not only mobilised the conservative base but brought over to the support of the Republican Party many people who had not previously voted for them. Indeed, in 1984, there was an actual committee called Democrats for Reagan, and later conservatives certainly admired him for that reason. He said - and this is a controversial view of Reagan - that Reagan had been what he wanted to be, ironic perhaps in the light of the presidency later on, he wanted to be a uniter and not a divider. He said, when he came to office, that 'America had suffered for too long from the arms race of anger' and he said, significantly, that both parties were to blame for that, and he wanted to cool tempers and try and be a President of all the people.

In his Inaugural, he said, remarkably, 'I thank President Clinton for his services to our nation, and I think Vice-President Gore for a contest conducted with spirit and ended with grace.' The New Yorker, a magazine, which was later by no means sympathetic to him, said it was: '...by far the best Inaugural Address in forty years. Indeed, it was better than all but a tiny handful of all the Inaugurals of all the Presidents since the Republic was founded.' Bush said he had been a uniter as Governor of Texas, because the Legislature had been controlled by the Democrats, the Lieutenant Governor had been a Democrat, and significantly endorsed Bush for the presidency, and the Speaker of the Texas Legislature was also a Democrat, representative of the majority there. Bush had got on very well with them.

He followed Clinton in having a large female and black contingent in his Cabinet. 47% of his Cabinet members, roughly the same figure as Clinton, were female or black. His Secretary of State and his National Security Advisor were black. He created a National Museum of Afro-American History, and gave \$5 million to it in unused campaign funds. He doubled American aid to Africa, and Bob Geldof said he was 'the most radical, in a positive sense, as a President, in his approach to Africa, since Kennedy'.

But there was also a dark side to George Bush, which came out during the 2000 campaign. One of the competitors with Bush for the Republican nomination was John McCain, the candidate in 2008. In some of the Southern states, people who were tempted to vote for McCain received telephone calls asking them, 'Would you be more likely to vote for him knowing he had fathered an illegitimate black child?' The McCain family had in fact adopted a dark-skinned girl from Bangladesh, whom they had originally brought to the United States for medical care. There is no evidence that Bush was personally responsible for these phone calls being made, or that he knew about them, but he did not publicly disavow such tactics.

In 2002, in the Mid-Term Elections, in Georgia, Republican advertisements showed a picture of the Democratic candidate for the Senate merging into that of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. That too was not disavowed publicly by Bush, though there is no sign that he himself authorised it. This was particularly distressing because the Democratic candidate, John Cleland, was a former Army captain, who had lost both his legs and an arm in Vietnam, and had voted for a number of Bush's programmes - the education reforms and the tax cuts, which I will talk about later, and also for the Iraq War. He was not an opponent of Bush, not that that would have excused it, but it was even worse.

In 2004, John Kerry, the Democrat candidate for President, faced quite false allegations of cowardice in Vietnam, and this was particularly strong given that Bush had managed not to fight in Vietnam at all but had obtained a post in the National Guard. Again, there is no evidence that Bush was responsible for this, but he did not publicly disavow it, and Kerry was not supple enough to refute that, which he could easily have done, by attacking Bush's own service record.

So there is something in the Bush record, I think it is fair to say, that he was perhaps prepared to win at all costs. His father did something similar to Dukakis in 1988, you may remember, on the question of whether Dukakis was too lax, as a Governor of Massachusetts, to prisoners, and they showed a picture of a black man who had been released on parole in Massachusetts and had then committed a rape and a murder, and this had a perhaps not-so-subtle racial overtone as well. So, there was something of a dark side to

Bush, and you have to evaluate that with the rest of it.

In his domestic policy, he followed the general Republican view that America required tax cuts. That was not difficult to do in 2001 because American then had a budget surplus. Indeed, the Federal Government was now collecting over 20% of America's national income, the highest in American history, and larger even than during the War. Bush lowered the top three rates of income tax and established a new low rate for the working poor, and he did that instead of higher social spending or debt repayment. There is nothing remarkable, you may say, in a tax cut for a Republican President when the budget is in surplus, and indeed, many Democrats agreed with him on that, but he continued in 2003 with further tax cuts, even when there were budget deficits and the prospect of substantial public spending on military matters in Iraq, homeland defence, and the war on terrorism. These cuts were on investment, income and wealth, reductions in taxes in stock dividends and capital gains, and he was shifting then the tax burden to those whose income came from wages, and this was attacked by the Democrats as regressive and conservative.

Ronald Reagan, by contrast, had not followed that policy, and when he faced deficits, he allowed Congress to reverse some of his 1981 tax cuts in order to balance the budget. So did the older Bush in 1990, though that may have cost him the Election in 1992. Nevertheless, the tax plan, you can argue, was a great achievement of Bush's presidency, and although the Democrats said the money should be used for healthcare, the Democratic Congress elected in 2006 did not try to reverse Bush's policies.

His second major domestic reform was in the field of education. Here he broke with traditional Republican policies, because the traditional Republican view had been that education was a state and local responsibility and not a federal responsibility. Ronald Reagan had poured great scorn on the Federal Department of Education, and even suggested at one time that it should be abolished and eliminated completely. Reagan said it was useless and that, 'Excellence does not begin in Washington; it begins locally.'

However, Bush broke with the traditional Republican orthodoxy on those matters. He said it was a federal responsibility, and that America had to ensure that all of its students met decent educational standards. He appointed to the Federal Department of Education an Afro-American, and he put great emphasis on the fact that certain ethnic minorities were not doing as well in education as they might. He said the key policy should be not only choice, which all Republicans favoured, but national standards and testing. He initiated a 'No child left behind' programme, which involved the greatest expansion of the federal role in education since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, supported by most of the Democrats, including Edward Kennedy, on the left wing of the Democrat Party. He supported it; he said that Bush was attacking what he called 'the soft bigotry of low expectations' particularly amongst certain minority communities. Bush said, 'When we get standards up, then we can have a real sense of choice in the schools - there will be a real choice; at present, many schools just aren't good enough, and many Americans are suffering as a result.' This is roughly what the Conservatives are now saying in Britain about the education system. But this was a break with the traditional Republican programme of small Government, lower budgets, and reduced public services. He wanted to use the Federal Government in a way that is much more characteristic of Democratic Administrations in America.

It is also fair to say that he used the Federal Government on many 'moral' policies - and I put 'moral' in quotation marks - which were deeply divisive in America: to limit abortion; to prohibit stem cell research; and to prohibit gay marriage. All that came, I think, from his evangelical background.

His foreign policy, in the first phase of his presidency, as I have said, was a highly reticent policy, and he said that America should withdraw from many of its commitments overseas. Many people in Europe were worried about a new bout of American isolationism. Bush seemed to be focused almost entirely on America and very little interested in other parts of the world.

When running for President, he said that American troops should not be used as peace-keepers around the world. In September 1999, he said this - and you may find this ironic when looking at his later presidency: 'The problem comes with open-ended deployments and unclear military missions. In these cases, we will ask: what is our goal, can it be met, and when do we leave. As I've said before, I will work hard to find political solutions that allow an orderly and timely withdrawal from places like Kosovo and Bosnia. We will encourage our allies to take a broader role. We will not be hasty, but we will not be permanent peace-keepers dividing warring parties. This is not our strength or our calling.' He favoured brief operations. He said the war in Kosovo was justifiable, but he said he would not use force to remove Milosevic - he said that would be wrong - you should use diplomacy. In his presidential campaign, he called for humility in foreign affairs. He said he would not support the use of humanitarian troops, as in Haiti. He agreed with Clinton that he was right not to intervene in Rwanda. He said, 'If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us. If we're a humble nation, but strong, they'll welcome us. We've got to be humble, and yet project strength.'

In a presidential debate with Gore, he spoke of the peace-keeping operations in Somalia, and he said, 'It started off as a humanitarian mission, and it changed into a nation-building mission, and that's where the mission went wrong. The mission was changed, and as a result, our nation paid the price. So I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war. I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow the dictators when it's in our best interests, but in this case, it was a nation-building exercise. The same with Haiti - I wouldn't have supported that either.'

In the final presidential debate, he said: 'It must be in our vital interests wherever we send troops. The mission must be clear. Soldiers must understand why we're going. The force must be strong enough so that the mission can be accomplished, and the exit strategy needs to be well-defined.'

So this was a highly reticent foreign policy. The only thing he really did that was controversial was to withdraw from the Kyoto treaty on global warming, and that was interpreted by other countries as isolationist as well. That treaty had been negotiated by Gore, but it is often forgotten it had been rejected by 95 votes to nought in the Senate, so it would be very difficult for any President to do anything else other than to withdraw from that treaty.

If you look at Bush's record on the eve of 9/11, his very reticence and restraint made him appear a rather minimalist and passive President, with no clear definition of aims. He disappointed the conservatives, because there were no really radical conservative policies. The tax cuts were minimal by then. He disappointed those in the middle of the road because of his attitudes to issues like abortion and stem cell research. He was a polarising President even then, surprisingly. His support amongst Republicans was 88%, and only 31% amongst Democrats. He was not proving to be a uniter even before 9/11; he was a divider. Nor had he succeeded in doing what Reagan had done, to create a new majority coalition behind him and behind the Republican Party. His father once said, memorably, when asked about his policies, that he lacked what he called 'the vision thing, the vision thing'. The younger Bush too seemed to lack 'the vision thing' in both domestic and foreign affairs. In fact, he seemed a weak President, perhaps a one-term President, given the fact that he had won by a fluke in 2000, and people thought he would not survive, and he was not winning over the middle ground.

But then came 9/11, which changed everything and transformed the Bush presidency. By his eloquent, immediate response to that atrocity, he won tremendous support amongst the American people as a whole, and that begins phase two of his presidency.

He said, 'The American people need to know that we're facing a different enemy than we have ever faced. This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting people, then runs for cover, but it won't be able to run for cover forever. This is an enemy that tries to hide, but it won't be able to hide forever. This is an

enemy that thinks its harbours are safe, but they won't be safe forever. This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way of our own choosing. Our purpose as a nation is firm, yet our wounds as a people are recent and unhealed and lead us to pray,' which was a typical Bush conclusion.

But, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, it is fair to say that he articulated in a brilliant way the concerns of all Americans, just as Roosevelt had done after Pearl Harbor, and his popularity grew enormously. Six weeks after 9/11, came what you might call the first attack on civil liberties which were to mark the Bush Administration. The Patriot Act was passed, with new powers for wire-tapping, surveillance, and investigation of terrorist suspects - the searches and interception of telephone and email, calls and the like - and the FBI detained over 1,200 people as possible dangers to national security, most of them Arabs or Muslims. Their names were withheld, and they were given no access to courts of counsel, and that was the beginning of the path that led to torture, water-boarding, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and all the rest of it. Bush, in February 2002, abandoned the Geneva Convention safeguards on the treatment of prisoners of war to allow these harsher methods of interrogation. He argued they were not in fact prisoners of war, but they were in another category. That was one response to it.

But the second response was to announce, in September 2002, a new doctrine of national security for America, which was the most dramatic change in American security policy since the beginning of the Cold War in the days of Harry Truman. Bush began by talking of a new world and a new challenge that America faced. The previous challenge, he said, had been with totalitarian states. That was now over. He said, 'America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few.' He said, in this new era, the strategy that America had adopted against communism, namely deterrents and containment, through alliances such as NATO, would no longer work. It had worked in defeating communism but it would not work in defeating the terrorists. The reason for this was that the Soviet Union was generally risk averse. That had been shown, for example, in the Cuban Missile Crisis and many of the other clashes of the Cold War. The terrorists, however, were not risk averse. They were fanatics, perfectly prepared, indeed some of them eager, to kill themselves as suicide bombers, as the 9/11 people had been. 'The Soviet Union saw nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort. The terrorists and the rogue states saw them as weapons of choice, and they had a specific object to achieve as many mass civilian casualties as they could, as was shown by 9/11.' Therefore, America, so Bush said, '...couldn't wait to be attacked, as she would be if there was a conventional war, but she had to meet the terrorists and rogue states on their own ground, by pre-emption if necessary,' and that if America's allies would not support that America might sometimes have to act unilaterally, without allies. Furthermore, Bush said that America faced a 'struggle of ideas', an ideological struggle. The terrorists, he said, were 'successors to Fascists, to Nazis, to Communists, and other totalitarians of the 20th Century', and the way they were to be defeated was to spread democracy in the rogue states which gave the terrorists sanction.

In his second Inaugural Address, in 2005, he said: 'It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.' That grandiose aim, in itself, was nothing new in American policy. It had been Woodrow Wilson, the President in the First World War, who had spoken of 'making the world safe for democracy'. Ronald Reagan has spoken of an 'evil empire', the countries controlled in particular by the Soviet Union, though it is fair to say he did not seek to undermine that empire with military force, but he worked from within, through the Pope in Poland, Gorbachev in Russia, and so on. There was not military force, and the only interventions under Ronald Reagan were in Grenada and in the Lebanon, but the reaction in the Lebanon rather shook him, and Reagan actually much more passive in the foreign policy than is sometimes said.

In addition to all that, John Kennedy had once said, in his Inaugural in 1961, America would 'bear any burden and pay any price to secure freedom in the world', and that is an American theme which, again, is difficult for us British to understand; that America sees itself as a country founded on certain values, and it says, as those values are good for Americans, they ought to be good for everyone else as well. It does not

necessarily mean you have to spread them by force, but what is good for America tends also to be good for other countries. We British, I think, do not think that. Perhaps we did when we had a large empire, but we tend to be a bit more modest now and say, if other countries want to run their affairs differently, that it is up to them. But that is perhaps a difference between being a superpower and not being a superpower.

It is fair to say that Woodrow Wilson and Roosevelt were much more cautious than Bush, you may argue, about going to war. They did not join either World War till America was attacked. Truman, also, did not react until America was attacked, and then, in Korea, he acted only when he had the support of allies and the United Nations. Eisenhower was very cautious about the use of military force, perhaps because he was a military man. The only exception to all this, of course, is the Vietnam War, in which America got gradually dragged in. The Gulf War in 1991 was a response to very clear aggression and supported by most of the countries of the United Nations.

The main exception to that, which gave Bush and Tony Blair succour, was the intervention in Kosovo in 1999, where you could not say that America or Britain was under attack, and it was not supported by the United Nations, indeed not brought there, because the Russians would have vetoed it, but the intervention there, divisive to some extent, but supported on humanitarian grounds to prevent an ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population by the Slavs.

When the question of Iraq came up, people said about Iraq there was no evidence that Saddam Hussein, the leader of Iraq, aided the bombers of 9/11. They said, in the Cold War, we had relied on deterrents with Stalin and that had worked. Saddam Hussein was much weaker than Stalin, and therefore would be easier to deter. To that, Bush and his supporters replied as follows: that when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor, the real enemy attacking America was not Japan but Nazi Germany, and Roosevelt responded to it by saying that he would make very certain that this form of treachery 'shall never endanger us again', and that meant dealing not only with Japan, the instigator of the attack, but Nazi Germany, and this was a warning of future attacks from an even more dangerous enemy. That was how Bush saw 9/11, as a warning, not only a dreadful attack in itself, but a warning of future attacks by an even more dangerous enemy, the enemy being a rogue state such as Iraq. Again, Bush said that the Soviet Union, no doubt, was deterred, but if you look at Hitler and the Japanese, they were not deterred, they were reckless, and he said, if you look at Saddam Hussein's record, he would not be deterred either - he attacked Iran, and he then invaded Kuwait, and he has used weapons of gas on his own people, which even Hitler did not do, in peace time. He said 9/11 was a premonition of what Saddam Hussein would do if he got weapons of mass destruction, the intelligence agents are telling us he has got them, but even if he has not, he is going to try and get them, and once he gets them, America will not be safe.

To the argument that the 9/11 people were religious or fanatical Muslims and Saddam Hussein was not, the Bush supporters said, if you look at the Second World War, the Nazis were in alliance with the Communists for a while. They were bitter ideological opponents, but had in common a hatred of the democracies, and the Nazis allied themselves with the Japanese, who otherwise had little in common with them, with Mussolini and with Spain, and quite different countries ideologically. Saddam Hussein, he said, is '...supposedly a secularist, but yet, he gives \$25,000 to the suicide bombers in the Middle East,' i.e. Hussein said he would give \$25,000 to the families of any suicide bomber who exploded a bomb in Israel belonging to Hamas.

So, there are arguments on both sides, but in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as I have said, Bush's support rose enormously, and in 2002, the Republicans captured the Senate and gained seats in the House of Representatives, so they controlled that too. That was the first time that a President's party had gained seats in both Houses in an off-year election since the War. Bush's ratings, at that point, went even higher than Ronald Reagan's. Just before the Iraq War, they were 70% positive, which was a very high level indeed.

It is difficult to re-capture the amount of support that America had at that time. When America said they were going to chase the Taliban out of Afghanistan, they were supported by Jordan, by Pakistan and by Russia - all countries that moved against America later on. In Britain, the Guards played the Star Spangled Banner in Horse Guards Parade, people may remember. The French, who were later to oppose Bush, said, 'Nous sommes tous Américains', 'We are all Americans.' Everyone supported America, and Bush's approval rating was enormously high.

A 41 nation NATO coalition joined America in the mission to remove the Taliban in Afghanistan. Some countries only sent token forces, but there was almost unanimous agreement about Afghanistan, and NATO, for the first time in its history, invoked Article V, that an attack on one member of NATO was an attack on all, so every member of NATO participated. The Taliban rapidly collapsed and it seemed that the war had ended quickly, but, as we now know, it has not, and Bush got involved in what he declared he would never get involved with, namely nation-building, and once America was stuck there, it was not clear what exit strategy they had, and that is still the problem, and as I say, the jury is still out on Afghanistan, as well of course as on Iraq.

It is important to remember that the story of Iraq does not begin with Bush. The first Gulf War, in 1991, had ended with a ceasefire, and Saddam, as a consequence of the ceasefire, was required to undertake various actions under United Nations Security Council Resolutions. On that argument, if he did not undertake those actions, the ceasefire no longer existed, and if that argument is right, America did not need a second Resolution, and nor did Britain, to fight in Iraq, and if you take that argument seriously, the wars of 1990 and 2003 are a single war, that simply Saddam Hussein had broken the ceasefire. That was the view of the British and Americans. It was not the view of other countries, which said that you should not go to war in those circumstances without something more, and that was an argument on which people will have different views.

But, as I say, Iraq did not begin with the younger Bush. It began with the Gulf War, with the older Bush, which stopped, having defeated the Iraqis, having driven them out of Kuwait, but did not do what many people wanted, march on to Baghdad and remove Saddam Hussein. I think they believed he would fall after that humiliating defeat, but he did not.

Perhaps it is for the psychologists to say how much it influenced the younger Bush, but there was an attempt by the Iraqis on the life of the older Bush in Kuwait, in 1993, which failed.

In January 1998, long before 9/11, a group of what came to be called neoconservatives in the Republican Foreign Policy Group, which then called themselves the Project for a New American Century, sent a message to President Clinton. They said, with Iraq, 'containment is no longer possible'. They said, 'Our ability to ensure that Saddam Hussein is not producing weapons of mass destruction has substantially diminished.' They said, 'Given the magnitude of the threat, the current policy, which depends for its success upon the steadfastness of our coalition partners and upon the cooperation of Saddam Hussein, is dangerous inadequate. The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use, or threaten to use, weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action, as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy.' That was signed by many people who were to make their reputations under Bush's presidency: Donald Rumsfeld, who became Secretary of Defense; Paul Wolfowitz, who worked under him; Richard Pearl, who had been known as the Angel of Death in the Reagan Administration; and John Bolton, who became Bush's Ambassador to the United Nations for a brief period. They sent that message to President Clinton. Now, you may be surprised to hear that President Clinton agreed with that assessment. He did not reject it; he agreed with it, and in 1998, under his leadership, Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, making regime change official American policy, under Clinton, long before Bush had gone near the presidency - this was in 1998, that regime change in Iraq was official American policy.

When this Act was passed, Saddam Hussein responded by expelling the United Nations weapons inspectors. At that point, Clinton called for a new government in Baghdad and he put pressure on Saddam Hussein so the weapons inspectors were returned, but they faced numerous obstacles. They told Clinton that they thought Saddam Hussein had anthrax and other bacteriological weapons. In December 1998, the inspectors left again, thinking an attack was imminent, and Clinton said that Saddam had abused his last chance and that '...the best way to end the threat once and for all is with a new Iraqi government, a government ready to live in peace with its neighbours, a government that respects the rights of its people.' At that stage, the American Air Force destroyed some, but they thought not all, of the weapons of mass destruction in the so-called Operation Desert Fox. They hoped that the regime would collapse, but in fact, it did not collapse, but there were heavy air bombardments of Iraq in 1998 and 1999.

At that point, Clinton gained a very valuable ally in his policies in Tony Blair. Tony Blair made a very important speech in Chicago in April 1999, one month after the Kosovo intervention, and that, remember, was not sanctioned by the United Nations. Blair made a speech in Chicago which echoed much of what the Republicans were saying. He said, 'We need to enter a new Millennium where dictators know they cannot get away with ethnic cleansing or repress their people with impunity.' He said, 'We are fighting not for territory in Kosovo but for values. In consequence, the principle of non-interference must be qualified in important respects. We need a new doctrine of international community to give explicit recognition that today, more than ever before, we are mutually dependent. In consequence,' he said, 'Britain, together with other countries which sought to uphold international morality, had a right, if not a duty, to intervene where necessary to prevent genocide, to deal with massive flows of refugees which become threats to international peace and security, and combat rogue states.' You can see that speech could have been made by the younger Bush, but it was made long before Bush became President, in Spring 1999. A lot of people say that Blair was George Bush's poodle, but you could actually say it the other way round. There is no evidence that Bush was influenced by Blair, but it is much more likely that Bush was influenced by Blair's ideas. It was Blair who laid down this doctrine, before Bush was anywhere near the White House. I think that is a very important point to note.

Bush supported that view, and in his State of the Union Address in 2002, he said, 'The Iraqi regime has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. States like these and their terrorist allies' and this is his famous phrase, 'constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. The price of indifference would be catastrophic.' He was talking about Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

In between then, in 2002, and the invasion in March 2003, Bush gave no less than 164 speeches or talks about Iraq, and he gave a number of justifications for intervention. The first was the weapons of mass destruction, but he did not put as much emphasis on that as the Blair Government did. He said that was one of the reasons. The second was Iraqi sponsorship of terror elsewhere. The third was the record of Iraq in having twice invaded other countries. The fourth was thwarting of United Nations mandatory resolutions. The fifth was that democracy would spread in the Arab world if Iraq herself became a democracy. The sixth was that the Iraqi regime was an obstacle to peace between Israel and the Palestinians. But I hope you can see from all this the real difference in American foreign policy is not so much between Clinton and Bush, but between Clinton and Bush phase two, on the one hand, and Bush phase one on the other, that if you knock out the first nine months of Bush's Administration, there is a considerable degree of continuity between Clinton and Bush, and that it seems that 9/11 changed everything for Bush, as he said, so that he decided to continue with a policy which was that of the Clinton Administration.

Interestingly, the vote in the Senate on the war, in October 2002, was 77 for and 23 against. Of the Democrats, 21 Democrats were against, but 29 in favour, and they included John Kerry, the candidate in 2004, John Edwards, his Vice-Presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, you would expect, and Joe Biden, the current American Vice-President. Barack Obama was not a Senator at that time but he was against the war, always.

In the House, however, there was some difference, that although the Democratic leadership supported the war, the majority of Democrats did not, and only 81 Democrats followed the Democrat leader in the House, Gephardt, in supporting the war, and 127 were against.

My opinion is that the Democrats would have followed a similar policy to that of Bush, but would have used very different rhetoric, and would have used the rhetoric of collective security much more and would have used the United Nations much more, and would possibly, though this is not certain, have gained more international support for intervention than Bush did, but it is not wholly clear.

There was, it is fair to say, a coalition of support for Bush, including countries such as Britain and Australia, and many of the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, if you had taken a vote with the new countries which came in in 2004, if you'd had a vote in the European Union, the majority would have favoured Bush, not opposed him. This was because all the new ex-Communist countries favoured America, but much of continental Western Europe was opposed. Donald Rumsfeld, the Defense Secretary, famously made a distinction between what he called 'old Europe', which was against America, and 'new Europe', which was in favour.

At first, all seemed to be going well. The Iraqi regime collapsed rapidly, and Bush gained again in popularity. He won his second term in 2004. He won by three million votes. He gained support since 2000, but his main gain of support had been not through winning over people who previously would not have supported the Republicans, but by hardening the Republican base. Remarkably enough, in the year 2000, four million evangelicals had not gone to the polls, and those people did vote in 2004, and you do not have to be a psephologist to guess who they voted for. So, unlike Ronald Reagan, who tried to reach out to dissident Democrats to build a base for himself, Bush really hardened an existing base and did not build it further. The Republicans gained control of the Senate, 55 to 45, and also held their position in the House. That was the zenith of the Bush presidency. After that, it was downhill all the way. I think one reason for that is the reason I have just given, that he did not understand that what had made him popular was his reaching out after 9/11 to be the President of the whole American people; he had articulated something in America as a whole, to non-Republicans in America, and abroad to foreign governments, and even much of the Muslim world, who were opposed obviously to terrorism and no doubt to Saddam Hussein as well. He had built a huge consensus. But perhaps, in 2004, he was struck by hubris, perhaps he overestimated his political capital, and perhaps he misread the election returns, but from then on, as I say, it was downhill all the way. He had faced two incompatible aims: to secure a Republican majority in Congress; and to unite the country. Now, when Reagan had faced that choice, he took the second option. Reagan did not campaign against Democrats who had supported him in foreign policy and on his tax cuts. Bush did, and as we have seen in Georgia, he had used some pretty dreadful tactics, but he established himself as a purely party President, with some unpleasant tactics. Therefore I think, if there is a comparison, sadly, it is probably less with Ronald Reagan than with Richard Nixon.

By 2006, it was clear that America was in for a very long haul. Americans, perhaps like most people, do not like long wars. When Dick Cheney, the Vice-President, was asked why in the first Gulf War they had not occupied Baghdad, he said, 'I don't know how we would have let go of that tar baby once we grabbed hold of it.' That was America's problem after 2004: they had no exit strategy, and really no strategy for how to govern Iraq, how to ensure it became a stable democracy if it could be.

By 2006, the Democrats had won Congress. The war had already lasted longer than American involvement in World War Two and of course it has now gone on longer still. The Vietnam War is the only war now that has been longer than the war in Iraq, which still shows no sign of coming to an end, though Bush could say that since 9/11 there have been no terrorist attacks, further terrorist attacks, against America, that people do not want to tweak the lion's tail any more, after seeing what has happened to those who did.

With Hurricane Katrina, in August 2005, Bush made a poor response. He took four days to come to New Orleans, and then he made a very poor speech, joking about his youthful partying days in New Orleans, which was not wholly appropriate to that terrible disaster, where thousands had drowned and many houses and businesses ruined.

His handling of the great economic crisis was also not very surefooted. He appointed a Secretary of the Treasury who I think did not show much ability or skill at dealing with Congress, and left that to his successor to deal with.

Now, for my conclusion, I return to the theme of the very first of my lectures, on the position of the President in the American Constitution. I said that the President, unlike a British Prime Minister, has an important symbolic role, that he is the head of a nation as well as a chief executive. He combines the role, if you like, of Prime Minister and Queen. The best Presidents have understood that - in my opinion, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Reagan - and they were popular when they left office for that reason. They were the most popular of the Presidents when they left office, because they had reached out beyond the party that had elected them, to become Presidents of the whole American people: Roosevelt in the Depression and the War; Eisenhower in securing moderate progress, peace and prosperity; and Reagan in reviving American self-confidence. It is very difficult to do that if you are a partisan, and that is why Presidents such as Truman and Johnson and Nixon are thought not to be at the same level as those Presidents I have just mentioned. That, I think, was pre-eminently true of the younger Bush, of whom I think no one, except Nixon, was ever as partisan. He did not ever understand, I think, that symbolic role, that the President has to represent the whole American nation, and we will see whether Barack Obama succeeds in achieving that aim.

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