RECONSIDERATIONS

SECOND TERMS in the White House open the way for second thoughts. They provide the least awkward moment at which to replace or reshuffle key advisers. They lessen, although nothing can remove, the influence of domestic political considerations, since re-elected presidents have no next election to worry about. They enhance authority, as allies and adversaries learn—whether with hope or despair—with whom they will have to deal for the next four years. If there is ever a time for an administration to evaluate its own performance, this is it.

George W. Bush has much to evaluate: he has presided over the most sweeping redesign of U.S. grand strategy since the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The basis for Bush's grand strategy, like Roosevelt's, comes from the shock of surprise attack and will not change. None of F.D.R.'s successors, Democrat or Republican, could escape the lesson he drew from the events of December 7, 1941: that distance alone no longer protected Americans from assaults at the hands of hostile states. Neither Bush nor his successors, whatever their party, can ignore what the events of September 11, 2001, made clear: that deterrence against states affords insufficient protection from attacks by gangs, which can now inflict the kind of damage only states fighting wars used to be able to achieve. In that sense, the course for Bush's second term remains that of his first one: the restoration of security in a suddenly more dangerous world.

Setting a course, however, is only a starting point for strategies: experience always reshapes them as they evolve. Bush has been rethinking his strategy for some time now, despite his reluctance during the campaign to admit mistakes. With a renewed and strengthened electoral mandate, he will find it easier to make midcourse corrections. The best way to predict their extent is to compare what his administration intended with what it has so far accomplished. The differences suggest where changes will—or at least should--take place.

PRE-EMPTION AND PREVENTION

THE NARROWEST GAP between Bush's intentions and his accomplishments has to do with preventing another major attack on the United States. Of course, one could occur at any moment, even between the completion of this article and its publication. But the fact that more than three years have passed without such an attack is significant. Few Americans would have thought it likely in the immediate aftermath of September 11. The prevailing view then was that a terrorist offensive was underway, and that the nation
would be fortunate to get through the next three months without a similar or more serious blow being struck.

Connecting causes with consequences is always difficult--all the more so when we know so little of Osama bin Laden's intentions or those of his followers. Perhaps al Qaeda planned no further attacks. Perhaps it anticipated that the United States would retaliate by invading Afghanistan and deposing the Taliban. Perhaps it foresaw U.S. military redeployments from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Iraq. Perhaps it expected a worldwide counterterrorist campaign to roll up substantial portions of its network. Perhaps it predicted that the Bush administration would abandon its aversion to nation building and set out to democratize the Middle East. Perhaps bin Laden's strategy allowed for all of this, but that seems unlikely. If it did not, then the first and most fundamental feature of the Bush strategy--taking the offensive against the terrorists and thereby surprising them--has so far accomplished its purposes.

A less obvious point follows concerning pre-emption and prevention, a distinction that arose from hypothetical hot-war planning during the Cold War. "Pre-emption" meant taking military action against a state that was about to launch an attack; international law and practice had long allowed such actions to forestall clear and immediately present dangers. "Prevention" meant starting a war against a state that might, at some future point, pose such risks. In mounting its post-September 11 offensive, the Bush administration conflated these terms, using the word "pre-emption" to justify what turned out to be a preventive" war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

It did so on the grounds that, in a post-September 11 world, both terrorists and tyrants threatened the security of the United States. Al Qaeda could not have acted without the support and sanctuary the Taliban provided. But the traditional warnings governments had used to justify pre-emption--the massing of armed forces in such a way as to confirm aggressive intent--would not have detected the September 11 attacks before they took place. Decisions made, or at least circumstances tolerated, by a shadowy regime in a remote country halfway around the world produced an act of war that killed more Americans than the one committed six decades earlier by Japan, a state known at the time to pose the clearest and most present of dangers.

Pre-emption in its older and narrower sense might have worked against the Japanese fleet as it approached Pearl Harbor--had it been detected in time. Pre-emptive arrests would have stopped Mohammed Atta and his 18 co-conspirators as they approached their respective airports if it had been possible to read their minds. No nation's safety, however, can depend on such improbable intelligence breakthroughs: as the Pearl Harbor historian Roberta Wohlstetter pointed out years ago and as the 9/11 Commission Report has now confirmed, detecting telltale signals in a world full of noise requires not just skill, but also extraordinary luck.

That is why the Bush administration's strategists broadened "preemption" to include the Cold War meaning of "prevention." To wait for terrorist threats to become clear and present was to leave the nation vulnerable to surprise attacks. Instead, the United States
would go after states that had harbored, or that might be harboring, terrorist gangs. It would at first seek to contain or deter such regimes the familiar means by which the Cold War had been fought--but if those methods failed, it reserved the right to pre-empt perceived dangers by starting a preventive war.

The old distinction between pre-emption and prevention, therefore, was one of the many casualties of September 11. That event revealed a category of threats so difficult to detect and yet so devastating if carried out that the United States had little choice but to use preemptive means to prevent their emergence. John Kerry made it clear during the 2004 campaign that he would not have relinquished that option had he won the presidency. His successful opponent certainly will not do so, nor are his successors likely to. This feature of the Bush grand strategy is here to stay.

SPEAKING MORE SOFTLY--AND MORE CLEARLY

PRE-EMPTION DEFINED as prevention, however, runs the risk amply demonstrated over the past two years--that the United States itself will appear to much of the world as a clear and present danger. Sovereignty has long been a sacrosanct principle in the international system. For the world's most powerful state suddenly to announce that its security requires violating the sovereignty of certain other states whenever it chooses cannot help but make all other states nervous. As the political scientist G. John Ikenberry has pointed out, Washington's policy of pre-emption has created the image of a global policeman who reports to no higher authority and no longer allows locks on citizens' doors. However shocking the September 11 attacks may have been, the international community has not found it easy to endorse the Bush administration's plan for regaining security.

Bush and his advisers anticipated this problem. After brushing aside offers of help in Afghanistan from NATO allies, the administration worked hard to win multilateral support for its first act of pre-emption for preventive purposes: the invasion of Iraq. It expected success. After all, who, apart from the United States, could organize the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, a dictator who had abused his people, started wars, flouted UN resolutions, supported terrorists, and, in the view of intelligence agencies everywhere, probably possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD)? The use of U.S. power to depose such a monster, Bush's strategists assumed, would be welcomed, not feared.

They were wrong. The war in Iraq gained far less international support than the administration had anticipated. One can debate at length the reasons why: the outdated structure of the UN Security Council, which better reflected the power balance of 1945 than 2003; the appearance Bush gave of having decided to go to war with or without that body's consent; the difficulty of establishing a credible connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda; the absence of incontrovertible evidence that the Iraqi dictator really did have WMD; the distrust that lingered from Bush's unnecessarily harsh rejections of the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court, and the Anti-Ballistic
Missile Treaty. Whatever the explanation, his strategy of pre-emption by consent did not get consent, and this was a major failure.

President Bush's decision to invade Iraq anyway provoked complaints that great power was being wielded without great responsibility, followed by an unprecedented collapse of support for the United States abroad. From nearly universal sympathy in the weeks after September 11, Americans within a year and a half found their country widely regarded as an international pariah.

It is easy to say that this does not matter—that a nation as strong as the United States need not worry about what others think of it. But that simply is not true. To see why, compare the American and Soviet spheres of influence in Europe during the Cold War. The first operated with the consent of those within it. The second did not, and that made an enormous difference quite unrelated to the military strength each side could bring to bear in the region. The lesson here is clear: influence, to be sustained, requires not just power but also the absence of resistance, or, to use Clausewitz's term, "friction." Anyone who has ever operated a vehicle knows the need for lubrication, without which the vehicle will sooner or later grind to a halt. This is what was missing during the first Bush administration: a proper amount of attention to the equivalent of lubrication in strategy, which is persuasion.

The American claim of a broadly conceived right to pre-empt danger is not going to disappear, because no other nation or international organization will be prepared anytime soon to assume that responsibility. But the need to legitimize that strategy is not going to go away, either; otherwise, the friction it generates will ultimately defeat it, even if its enemies do not. What this means is that the second Bush administration will have to try again to gain multilateral support for the pre-emptive use of U.S. military power.

Doing so will not involve giving anyone else a veto over what the United States does to ensure its security and to advance its interests. It will, however, require persuading as large a group of states as possible that these actions will also enhance, or at least not degrade, their own interests. The United States did that regularly—and highly successfully—during World War II and the Cold War. It also obtained international consent for the use of predominantly American military force in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, in Bosnia in 1995, in Kosovo in 1999, and in Afghanistan in 2001. Iraq has been the exception, not the rule, and there are lessons to be learned from the anomaly.

One is the need for better manners. It is always a bad idea to confuse power with wisdom: muscles are not brains. It is never a good idea to insult potential allies, however outrageous their behavior may have been. Nor is it wise to regard consultation as the endorsement of a course already set. The Bush administration was hardly the first to commit these errors. It was the first, however, to commit so many so often in a situation in which help from friends could have been so useful.

Another lesson relates to language. The president and his advisers preferred flaunting U.S. power to explaining its purpose. To boast that one possesses and plans to maintain
"strengths beyond challenge" may well be accurate, but it mixes arrogance with vagueness, an unsettling combination. Strengths for what purpose? Challenges from what source? Cold War presidents were careful to answer such questions. Bush, during his first term, too often left it to others to guess the answers. In his second, he will have to provide them.

A final and related lesson concerns vision. The terrorists of September 11 exposed vulnerabilities in the defenses of all states. Unless these are repaired, and unless those who would exploit them are killed, captured, or dissuaded, the survival of the state system itself could be at stake. Here lies common ground, for unless that multinational interest is secured, few other national interests--convergent or divergent can be. Securing the state will not be possible without the option of pre-emptive military action to prevent terrorism from taking root. It is a failure of both language and vision that the United States has yet to make its case for pre-emption in these terms.

IRAQ IS NOT VIETNAM

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION believed that it could invade Iraq without widespread consent because it expected a replay of the Afghanistan experience: military resistance would quickly evaporate, Iraqis would welcome the Americans and their allies, and the victorious coalition would quickly install an Iraqi regime capable of controlling and rebuilding the country. Success on the ground, together with confirmation that Saddam Hussein did indeed have WMD, would yield the consensus that diplomacy had failed to produce. The occupation of Iraq would become a broadly supported international effort, even if the invasion had not been.

The military campaign proceeded as anticipated, but nothing else did. Enough troops were deployed to defeat the Iraqi army, but not to restore order, suppress looting, and protect critical infrastructure. Iraqis did not step forward to form a new government, however grateful they may have been to have their old one removed. Pentagon planners misjudged how quickly many Iraqis would begin to see their liberators as oppressors. They even hastened that process through a laissez-faire attitude toward the rights of prisoners that produced sickening abuses. WMD were not found. And the expanded multilateral assistance Bush had hoped for in running the occupation never arrived. To note gaps between intentions and accomplishments in Iraq is to understate: they littered the landscape.

The Bush administration has been scrambling ever since to close those gaps. It has done so with an indecisiveness that is quite at odds with its normal method of operation: it has seemed, far too often, simply not to know what to do. As a consequence, it has come close, more than once, to losing the initiative in Iraq. Visions of a Vietnam-like quagmire have begun to loom.

Such visions are, however, premature. After a year and a half of fighting, U.S. casualties in Iraq have yet to exceed what the monthly total in the Vietnam War frequently was. Iraqi losses, although much greater, are nowhere near what the Vietnamese suffered. The
insurgents receive far less external aid than the Soviet Union and China provided to the
North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. There is no Iraqi equivalent to Ho Chi Minh: Iraq's
division among Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds has created a balance of antagonisms, not a
unified resistance.

It is also the case that the U.S. military tends to learn from its mistakes. Historians now
acknowledge that American counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam were succeeding
during the final years of that conflict; the problem was that support for the war had long
since crumbled at home. Military learning is also taking place in Iraq, but the domestic
opposition is not even approaching Vietnam-era proportions: 2004 was nothing like 1968.
There is still time, then, to defeat the insurgency--even though the insurgents are no doubt
also learning from their own mistakes.

Victory, in the end, will go to the side that can rally the "silent majority" of Iraqis who
have so far not taken sides. Here an advantage lies with the Americans and their allies,
for they can offer elections. The insurgents cannot. Opportunities to vote in equally
dangerous circumstances--in El Salvador, Cambodia, and most recently Afghanistan--
have punctured the pretensions of terrorists by diminishing the fears on which they
depend. There are, to be sure, no guarantees. Elections could produce governments that
are weak, incompetent, unrepresentative, brutal, or even fanatically opposed to the
occupiers themselves. The risks of holding them, however, are preferable to the
alternatives of swamping Iraq with U.S. troops or abandoning it altogether.

And what if the United States, despite its best efforts, ultimately fails in Iraq? It is only
prudent to have plans in place in case that happens. The best one will be to keep Iraq in
perspective. It seems to be the issue on which everything depends right now, just as
Vietnam was in 1968. Over the next several years, however, President Richard Nixon and
National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger showed that it was possible to "lose" Vietnam
while "gaining" China. What takes place during the second Bush term in Afghanistan,
Egypt, Iran, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and especially the
Israeli-Palestinian relationship may well be as significant for the future of the Middle
East as what occurs in Iraq. And what happens in China, India, Russia, Europe, and
Africa may well be as important for the future of the international system as what
transpires in the Middle East. All of which is only to say that Iraq must not become, as
Vietnam once was, the single lens through which the United States views the region or
the world.

WINNING THE WAR ON TERRORISM

GRAND STRATEGY is as much about psychology as it is facts on the ground. The Bush
administration intended that a demonstrated capacity for retaliation, pre-emption, and/or
prevention in Afghanistan and Iraq would convince al Qaeda that the United States could
not be run out of the Middle East. "Shock and awe" would dry up recruiting for that
organization. And it would deter other states in the region and elsewhere from supporting
terrorism in the future. The record of accomplishments here is mixed.
Not even bin Laden can now expect a diminished U.S. presence in the Middle East: in political, economic, and certainly military terms, the United States is more firmly entrenched there than it was prior to September 11. It is less clear, though, that the Bush strategy has impeded al Qaeda's recruiting. The toppling of Saddam Hussein humiliated at least as many Arabs as it pleased. The occupation of Iraq revealed irresolution and inefficiency as often as the firmness it was meant to convey. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a festering grievance: military victory in Iraq removed a threat to Israel, but it has yet to speed a settlement. On balance, U.S. power has become more respected in the Middle East. But respect for U.S. culture, institutions, and leadership has significantly declined.

Efforts to deter dangerous states have also produced mixed results. Whatever Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi's reasons for abandoning Libya's quest for WMD, his decision was just what the Bush strategists hoped would happen on a wider scale. They can also claim, as a success, Pakistan's dismantling of Abdul Qadeer Khan's network for marketing nuclear weapons components. In Iran and North Korea, however, the picture is bleaker: the invasion of Iraq appears to have convinced leaders in those countries that they must have a nuclear capability of their own. Far from deterring them, the United States may have pushed them into finding ways to deter it.

Grand strategies always have multiple audiences: actions aimed at particular adversaries can (and usually do) make unintended impressions on others. A major priority for the second Bush administration, then, will be to determine the extent to which its aggressive use of U.S. military power in Afghanistan and Iraq has produced results it did not want elsewhere, and to adjust strategy accordingly.

It will be necessary, in doing this, to avoid extremes of pessimism and optimism. The Bush team made the worst of Saddam Hussein's alleged WMD, while making the best of the more credible capabilities Iran and North Korea have been developing. Whatever the reasons behind this disparity, it is not sustainable. For even if the United States should succeed in Iraq, its larger strategy will have failed if it produces a nuclear-capable Iran or North Korea, and those countries behave in an irresponsible way.

This is not to predict that they will. States that have acquired nuclear weapons have so far handled them carefully. To take comfort in this pattern, however, is like trying to find reassurance in an extended game of Russian roulette: sooner or later the odds will turn against you. The same is true of the risk that nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons could make the leap, like some lethal virus, from potentially detergable states to undetergable terrorists. It may take the use of such weapons to awaken the world to this danger. That too, however, is a Russian roulette solution, which makes it not worth waiting for.

There are opportunities, then, for a renewed U.S. commitment to the task of keeping WMD out of the hands of tyrants and terrorists by multilateral means. The prospects for such an effort, like those for the Iraqi occupation, are better than they might at first seem. UN sanctions do appear to have prevented the rebuilding of Saddam Hussein's WMD
after the Gulf War. That organization has shown itself effective as well in publicizing, if not resolving, the crisis over Iran's nuclear program. Cooperative initiatives elsewhere have also shown promise: examples include the Nunn-Lugar program to dismantle nuclear stockpiles, the Proliferation Security Initiative to intercept illegal weapons shipments, and the tacit agreement North Korea's neighbors have reached that none has an interest in seeing Pyongyang develop the capacity for mass destruction.

The Bush administration has been proceeding in this direction. Its multilateralism outside of Afghanistan and Iraq is insufficiently acknowledged—probably because it has been inadequately explained. What is needed now is a clear and comprehensive statement of which international organizations and initiatives the United States can cooperate with, which it cannot, and why. It is as bad to promise too much, as the Clinton administration did, as to propose too little, as happened during Bush's first term. But with tact, flexibility, and a willingness to listen—as well as the power to pre-empt if such strategies fail—Americans could by these means regain what they have recently lost: the ability to inspire others to want to follow them.

**SOWING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE**

PRESIDENT BUSH has insisted that the world will not be safe from terrorists until the Middle East is safe for democracy. It should be clear by now that he is serious about this claim: it is neither rhetorical nor a cloak for hidden motives. Democratization, however, is a longterm objective, so it is too early to assess accomplishments. What one can evaluate is the extent to which the Bush strategists have succeeded in a more immediate task they set for themselves: to clear the way for democratization by shattering a status quo in the Middle East that they believed had victimized the people of the region and had become a threat to the rest of the world.

The regimes responsible for this situation had three characteristics. They were authoritarian: liberation from colonialism and its equivalents had left the region in a new kind of bondage to tyrannical or at least unrepresentative rule. Most of them benefited from the geological accident of where oil lay beneath the surface of the earth, so that the need to remain competitive within a global economy did not produce the political liberalization that it did almost everywhere else. And several of these regimes had cut deals with an Islamist religious establishment that had its own reasons for resisting change, thereby reinforcing a long-standing trend toward literal readings of the Koran that left little room for alternative interpretations. This unhealthy combination of authoritarianism, wealth, and religious literalism, the Bush administration maintained, fed frustrations for many and fueled rage in a few: that was enough to bring about September 11. Breaking this status quo would make the world safer in the short run and facilitate democratization in the long run.

The shock and awe that accompanied the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were meant to begin this process, but Bush and his advisers did not rely solely on military means to sustain its momentum. They expected that September 11 and other terrorist excesses would cause a majority of Muslims to recoil from the extremists among them. They
anticipated that the United States would be able to plant the seeds of democracy in the countries where it had deposed dictators, and that these would spread. They also assumed that the Middle East could not indefinitely insulate itself from the democratization that had already taken hold in much of the rest of the world.

Divisions have indeed surfaced among Muslims over the morality and effectiveness of terrorism. Saudis have seen the terrorists they financed strike back at them. Well before Yasir Arafat's death, Palestinians were questioning what suicide bombing and a perpetual intifada had accomplished; now there is even more room for second thoughts. Iraqis have begun to speak out, if cautiously, against the hostage-taking and televised beheadings that have afflicted their country. And the Beslan massacre—the taking of a school in southern Russia, with the subsequent slaughter of more than 300 children and teachers has raised doubts throughout the Middle East that terror directed against innocents can ever be justified when decoupled from any apparent political objective.

Whether democracy can be "planted" through military occupation in that part of the world is not yet clear, however, and may not be for some time. Three years after the invasion of Afghanistan, that country still is not secure. Taliban and al Qaeda elements remain, economic recovery is spotty, warlords rule, opium cultivation thrives, and Westerners cannot travel safely much beyond Kabul. And yet, on October 9, 2004, millions of Afghans lined up to vote in an election that had no precedent in their nation's long history. Had anyone predicted this three years ago, the response would have been incredulity—if not doubts about sanity.

What this suggests is that forces of disruption and construction coexist in Afghanistan: their shifting balance is beyond precise measurement. If that is true there, then it is all the more so in Iraq, where the contradictions are greater, the stakes are higher, and the standards for making optimistic or pessimistic judgments are even more opaque. The best one can say at the moment, of both countries, is that they defy generalization. That is less than the Bush administration hoped for. It is far more, however, than any previous American administration has achieved in the Middle East. For better or for worse, the status quo exists no longer.

And what of the region's insulation from the wave of democratization that has swept the globe? According to Freedom House statistics, no countries allowed universal suffrage in 1900. By 1950, 22 did, and by 2000, the number had reached 120, a figure that encompassed 62.5 percent of the world's population. Nor, as the examples of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Turkey suggest, is there reason to think that representative government and Islam are incompatible. Democratization has indeed been delayed in the Arab world, as Arabs themselves have begun to acknowledge. To conclude that it can never take hold there, however, is to neglect the direction in which the historical winds have been blowing. And the best grand strategies, like the most efficient navigators, keep the winds behind them.

The second Bush administration will now have the opportunity to reinforce the movement—the shift in the status quo—that the first Bush administration started in the
Middle East. A Kerry administration would probably have done the same. What September 11 showed was that the United States can no longer insulate itself from what happens in that part of the world: to do so would be to ignore clear and present danger. A conservative Republican administration responded by embracing a liberal Democratic ideal--making the world safe for democracy--as a national security imperative. If that does not provide the basis for a renewed grand strategic bipartisanship, similar to the one that followed Pearl Harbor so long ago, then one has to wonder what ever would.

**WHAT WOULD BISMARCK DO?**

FINALLY, one apparent assumption that runs through the Bush grand strategy deserves careful scrutiny. It has to do with what follows shock and awe. The president and his advisers seem to have concluded that the shock the United States suffered on September 11 required that shocks be administered in return, not just to the part of the world from which the attack came, but to the international system as a whole. Old ways of doing things no longer worked. The status quo everywhere needed shaking up. Once that had happened, the pieces would realign themselves in patterns favorable to U.S. interests.

It was free-market thinking applied to geopolitics: that just as the removal of economic constraints allows the pursuit of self-interest automatically to advance a collective interest, so the breaking up of an old international order would encourage a new one to emerge, more or less spontaneously, based on a universal desire for security, prosperity, and liberty. Shock therapy would produce a safer, saner world.

Some such therapy was probably necessary in the aftermath of September 11, but the assumption that things would fall neatly into place after the shock was administered was the single greatest misjudgment of the first Bush administration. It explains the failure to anticipate multilateral resistance to pre-emption. It accounts for the absence of planning for the occupation of Iraq. It has produced an overstretched military for which no "revolution in military affairs" can compensate. It has left official obligations dangerously unfunded. And it has allowed an inexcusable laxity about legal procedures--at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere--to squander the moral advantage the United States possessed after September 11 and should have retained.

The most skillful practitioner ever of shock and awe, Otto von Bismarck, shattered the post-1815 European settlement in order to unify Germany in 1871. Having done so, however, he did not assume that the pieces would simply fall into place as he wished them to: he made sure that they did through the careful, patient construction of a new European order that offered benefits to all who were included within it. Bismarck's system survived for almost half a century.

The most important question George W. Bush will face in his second term is whether he can follow Bismarck's example. If he can shift from shock and awe to the reassurance--and the attention to detail—that is necessary to sustain any new system, then the prospects for his post-September 11 grand strategy could compare favorably m Bismarck's accomplishments, as well as to those of U.S. presidents from Roosevelt through Clinton.
For their post-Pearl Harbor grand strategy, over more than half a century, persuaded the world that it was better off with the United States as its dominant power than with anyone else. Bush must now do the same.

By John Lewis Gaddis

JOHN LEWIS GADDIS is Robert A. Lovett Professor of History at Yale.