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Bridges, Bombs, or Bluster?

Madeleine K. Albright

EITHER, OR

> Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.
>
> There are only two powers now in the world. One is America, which is tyrannical and oppressive. The other is a warrior who has not yet been awakened from his slumber and that warrior is Islam.
>
> Make no mistake about it: the choice for sure is between two visions of the world.

FEW READERS will fail to identify the first quotation cited above: it was uttered by President George W. Bush, speaking soon after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Few readers, similarly, will be surprised to learn that the second quote came from a Sunni Muslim cleric in Baghdad, Imam Mouaid al-Ubaidi. The third quote, however, may be a bit harder to identify: it was spoken by French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, describing the different world views now held by Washington and Paris. And it should remind us that not everyone divides the world along the same lines as the United States.

Framing choices is central to national security policy. Since World War II, no nation has played a more influential role in defining such alternatives than the United States. Today, however, the Bush administration purports to be redefining the fundamental choice "every nation, in every region" must make. America's radical adversaries—eager to

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promote themselves as the United States' chief nemeses—are echoing the attempt. Those caught in the middle, however, suggest the choices before them may not be quite so simple.

For President Bush, September 11 came as a revelation, leading him to the startled conclusion that the globe had changed in ways gravely hazardous to the security—indeed, the very survival—of the United States. This conclusion soon led Bush to a fateful decision: to depart, in fundamental ways, from the approach that has characterized U.S. foreign policy for more than half a century. Soon, reliance on alliance had been replaced by redemption through preemption; the shock of force trumped the hard work of diplomacy, and long-time relationships were redefined.

In making these changes, Bush explicitly rejected the advice offered by one senior statesman who warned, "this most recent surprise attack [should] erase the concept in some quarters that the United States can somehow go it alone in the fight against terrorism, or in anything else, for that matter." So said George H.W. Bush, the United States' 41st president. But his son, the 43rd president, offered his own perspective shortly before going to war with Iraq: "At some point, we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America."

The second Bush administration, believing that its perception of the meaning of September 11 is self-evidently right, has failed to make a sustained effort to persuade the rest of the world to share it. As a result, the world does not in fact subscribe to the same view. Certainly, most of the world does not agree with Bush that September 11 "changed everything." This is not to say the attacks were met by indifference. On the contrary, NATO, for the first time in its history, declared the crimes to be acts of aggression against the entire alliance. Almost every government in the Muslim world, including Iran and the Palestinian Authority, condemned the strikes. U.S. allies, from Canada to Japan to Australia, rushed to aid or complement the American military campaign against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan, properly confronted by the administration with a stark choice, chose to cooperate as well. Even China and Russia, plagued by Muslim separatists, pledged solidarity. For months after September 11, it seemed the Bush administration would harness these reactions to unite the world in opposition to a common threat.

The president began well, emphasizing the array of nationalities victimized in the Twin Towers attacks and gathering broad support for the military operation he directed at the perpetrators. Al Qaeda's Taliban protectors were pushed from power, its training camps were destroyed, arms caches were seized, and many of its leaders were captured or killed. But instead of single-mindedly building on these gains, the Bush administration has since steadily enlarged and complicated its own mission.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, for example, President Bush focused not on al Qaeda and the work remaining in Afghanistan, but rather on the so-called axis of evil. In public remarks later that year, he emphasized not the value of building an antiterror coalition, but rather his unilateral intention to maintain U.S. "military strength beyond challenge, thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless." He then asked Congress for the authority to explore new uses for nuclear weapons, creating the perception overseas that he was lowering the threshold for nuclear strikes—despite the United States' vast conventional military superiority and the risks posed to U.S. security by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Do we really want a world in which every country feels entitled to attack any other that might someday threaten it?

When the administration published its 2002 National Security Strategy last September, it took this process even further, transforming anticipatory self-defense—a tool every president has quietly held in reserve—into the centerpiece of its national security policy. This step, however, was dangerously easy to misconstrue. (Do we really want a world in which every country feels entitled to attack any other that might someday threaten it?) And when Bush did discuss the pursuit of al Qaeda, he portrayed it less as a global struggle against a global threat than as an effort to bring terrorists to "American justice"—as if justice alone were not enough.

Finally, in 2003, Washington did begin once more to rally world support—but this time against Iraq, not al Qaeda. To bolster the decision to oust Saddam Hussein, administration officials lumped his

regime together with al Qaeda, describing them as complementary halves of the same existential threat. U.S. officials declared that America would act against such threats when and wherever necessary, regardless of international law, notwithstanding the doubts of allies, and without concern for the outrage of those who might misunderstand U.S. actions. America, said the president, had no choice but to go to war to prevent its enemies from obtaining more weapons or growing more powerful. And so the United States duly went to war against Iraq, despite having convinced only four members of the UN Security Council to back the action.

NEITHER, NOR

MANY OBSERVERS see in the Bush administration's policies an admirable demonstration of spine in confronting those who threaten the safety of the American people. I would join the applause—if only those policies were safeguarding U.S. citizens more effectively.

But they are not. Moreover, I remain convinced that had Al Gore been elected president, and had the attacks of September 11 still happened, the United States and NATO would have gone to war in Afghanistan together, then deployed forces all around that country and stayed to rebuild it. Democrats, after all, confess support for nation building, and also believe in finishing the jobs we start. I also believe the United States and NATO together would have remained focused on fighting al Qaeda and would not have pretended—and certainly would not have been allowed to get away with pretending—that the ongoing failure to capture Osama bin Laden did not matter. As for Saddam, I believe the Gore team would have read the intelligence information about his activities differently and concluded that a war against Iraq, although justifiable, was not essential in the short term to protect U.S. security. A policy of containment would have been sufficient while the administration pursued the criminals who had murdered thousands on American soil.

The Bush administration's decision to broaden its focus from opposing al Qaeda to invading Iraq and threatening military action against others has had unintended and unwelcome consequences. According to the recent findings of the Pew Global Attitudes Project,

which surveyed 16,000 people in 20 countries and the Palestinian territories in May, the percentage of those who have a favorable view of the United States has declined sharply (15 percentage points or more) in nations such as Brazil, France, Germany, Jordan, Nigeria, Russia, and Turkey. In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority state, the view of the United States plunged from 75 percent favorable to 83 percent negative between 2000 and 2003. Support for the U.S.-led war on terror has declined in each of the countries listed above, along with pivotal Pakistan, where it stands at a disheartening 20 percent. The citizens of such NATO allies as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy rated Russia's Vladimir Putin more highly as a world leader than Bush. Significant majorities of those interviewed in Russia and in 7 of 8 predominantly Muslim countries (Kuwait being the exception) claimed to be somewhat or very worried about the potential threat to their societies posed by the U.S. military. I never thought the day would come when the United States would be feared by those it has neither the intention nor the cause to harm.

The ouster of Saddam has indeed made the world, or at least Iraq, a better place. But when the United States commits tens of billions of dollars to any worthwhile project, that is the least it should be able to say. Even more vital is progress toward mobilizing the kind of multinational, multicultural, multifaceted, and multiyear initiative required to discredit, disrupt, and dismantle al Qaeda and whatever splinter factions it may one day spawn. That initiative will require a maximum degree of global coordination and the integration of force, diplomacy, intelligence, and law. It will require strong working relationships in regions where radical ideologies thrive and pro-Western sentiments are scant. And above all, it will require vigorous leadership from Islamic moderates, who must win the struggle for control of their own faith. Unfortunately, the Iraq war and the subsequent U.S. occupation of Baghdad—the capital of Islam during that faith's golden age—have made more difficult the choices Islamic moderates and others around the world must make.

The problem is that President Bush has reframed his initial question. Instead of simply asking others to oppose al Qaeda, he now asks them to oppose al Qaeda, support the invasion of an Arab country, and endorse the doctrine of preemption—all as part of a single package.

Faced with this choice, many who staunchly oppose al Qaeda have nevertheless decided that they do not want to be "with" the United States, just as some Iraqis are now making clear their opposition both to Saddam and to those who freed them from him.

It is perhaps unsurprising to find attitudes of this sort widespread in the Arab world. But it is more remarkable to find them taking hold in much of Europe. President Bush ran for office pledging to be "a uniter, not a divider," but as the numbers suggest, he has proved highly divisive among the United States' closest friends. This was true even before September 11, thanks to his administration's scorn for international measures such as the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. But the divide deepened considerably in the run-up to the second Gulf War, and it has moderated only slightly since. Transatlantic friction, of course, is not new. But European unease with American pretensions, coupled with American doubts about European resolve, has created the potential for a long-term and dangerous rift.

Many who staunchly oppose al Qaeda have nevertheless decided that they do not want to be "with" the United States.

Some commentators have tried to explain European opposition to the war as being based on a slavish allegiance to multilateral organizations, a sense of relative powerlessness, or simple jealousy of the United States. Such analyses, however, miss the possibility that the American arguments simply were not fully persuasive. I personally felt the war was justified on the basis of Saddam's decade-long refusal to comply with UN Security Council resolutions on WMD. But the administration's claim that Saddam posed an imminent threat was poorly supported, as was its claim of his alleged connections to al Qaeda. The war's opponents also raised a number of questions that were not very ably answered regarding American plans for postwar reconstruction and the possibility that the war would actually enhance al Qaeda's appeal to potential recruits. It should be no wonder, then, that there were disagreements about the wisdom of going to war. It was, after all, a war of choice, not of necessity. And it was initiated by Washington in a show of dominance prompted by a sense of vulnerability that most Europeans do not fully share.

The concerns raised by European critics of the war were neither trivial nor unanswerable. They should, however, have been answered not with exaggerated, unproven allegations, but with a combination of patience and ample evidence. By linking Baghdad to al Qaeda, the Bush administration sought to equate opposition to fighting Iraq with gutlessness in confronting bin Laden. This tactic, wildly unfair, contributed to a perception within the American public that the French and the Germans were not simply quarrelsome but traitorous. The real problem with the war critics, however, was not their timidity toward al Qaeda but their record of having cut Saddam too much slack in complying with UN Security Council resolutions over the last decade. The French and the Russians were especially culpable in this regard; their special pleading had, for years, given Saddam hope that he could divide the council and get sanctions lifted without coming clean about his weapons programs.

The best rebuttal Washington had to qualms about regime change was that military force was the only way (in the absence of effective UN inspections) to enforce the council's resolutions and thereby strengthen both the UN's credibility and international law. Unfortunately, the Bush administration made its eagerness to pull the plug on chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix and his team transparent and billed its preemptive war doctrine as a replacement for international law. As a consequence, much of the world saw the invasion not as a way to put muscle into accepted rules, but rather as the inauguration of a new set of rules, written and applied solely by the United States.

It didn't have to be this way. After World War II, the United States was also at a pinnacle of power, and also faced new and unprecedented dangers. Yet the Truman administration still sat down and haggled with a flock of less powerful countries about what the rules of the new international game should be. The current administration, however, has created the impression that it does not care what others think, and it has thereby set the world's teeth on edge.

As I suggested above, responsibility for the transatlantic split does not rest on the shoulders of the Bush administration alone. The French certainly have not helped matters, by arguing, for example, that the very purpose of European integration should be to create a counterweight to American power. This constitutes de Villepin's

choice "between two visions of the world," by which he means a choice between a unipolar world in which Washington acts as an unrestrained hegemon and a multipolar one in which American power is offset and balanced by other forces, most particularly a united Europe. But that argument is ludicrous. The idea that the power of the United States endangers the interests of European democracies, rather than strengthens and helps shield them, is utter nonsense. American power may harm French pride, but it also helped roll back Hitler, save a blockaded Berlin, defeat communism, and rid the Balkans of a rampaging Slobodan Milosevic.

The divisions that have arisen between the United States and many in Europe can and must be narrowed. The challenge for Europe is to reject French hyperventilating about American hyperpower and keep its perspective. The United States has not lost its moorings, and the American people, with an assist from Secretary of State Colin Powell and other voices of reason, will not let the administration go too far.

The challenge for the United States, however, is to frame a choice for Europe that most of Europe can embrace with dignity (if not always with France). To help this mission along, NATO should be used in Afghanistan (where it has finally gained a role, two years after September 11) and in Iraq, where its umbrella might help relieve the pressure on hard-pressed U.S. troops. The Bush administration should enthusiastically welcome European efforts to develop an independent rapid reaction capability, especially to conduct peacekeeping operations and respond to humanitarian emergencies. When Europeans perform important jobs, as the Germans and the Turks have done over the past year in Afghanistan, they deserve congratulations, regardless of differences over less basic issues. Furthermore, the Europeans should be invited, not directed, to work closely with Washington on the toughest challenges, including that posed by Iran's nuclear program. Perhaps above all, the Europeans should be treated as adults. If they have differences with U.S. policy, those differences should be considered seriously, not dismissed as signs of weakness (or age) or tantamount to treason. Washington needs to recall that "allies" and "satellites" are distinctly different things.

JUDGING SUCCESS IN IRAQ

PERHAPS ONE REASON this administration does not feel the need to consult much with others is its surety of vision. President Bush proclaimed last March that the war in Iraq would prove a decisive first step toward the transformation of the entire Middle East. The demonstration of U.S. resolve, so his logic went, would cause terrorists and those who shelter and sponsor them to tremble. According to the president, "the terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed." The creation of a democratic Iraq, to be achieved with the assistance of a modest number of American troops for a relatively short period of time, would send an instructive message to undemocratic Arab regimes and provide a helpful model for a potential new Palestinian state. Deprived of Iraqi payments to the families of suicide bombers, anti-Israeli terrorists would soon close their bomb factories, and serious peace negotiations could begin. Saddam's fall would also provide a useful lesson to would-be WMD proliferators, both in faraway North Korea and in nearby Iran.

Whatever one might think of the likelihood that this vision will be realized, it certainly qualifies as sweeping and well intentioned. Those who suspect the war in Iraq was a grab for oil are mistaken; it was a grab for a place in history. It deserves time now to play itself out. No one expected every element to fall into place smoothly. Critics such as myself may carp about bumps in the road and setbacks, but the problems will matter little if momentum does build toward a truly democratic and stable Iraq, the weakening of al Qaeda, an end to anti-Israeli terrorism, a halt to Iran's nuclear ambitions, and movement toward accountable government within the Arab world. These are the standards for success the Bush administration set for itself in going to war with Iraq at the moment and under the circumstances it did. The administration merits the courtesy of a reasonable period of time to achieve those goals.

Whether time will in fact bring such successes depends on a series of choices the United States can help frame. The most basic concerns the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the use of terror as a means to achieve political change.

To most Americans, the choice is simple. As the president has said, the use of terror is something you are either for or against, and if you are against it, certain actions must follow. Americans may find it absurd that decent people could believe differently. But history shows that most people, not exceptionally villainous themselves, can nonetheless be persuaded that evil is not evil but rather something else. Romans saw glory in the pillage of the Parthians; pious Catholics saw purity of faith in the Spanish Inquisition; the United States' founding fathers saw economic necessity in slavery; Bosnian Serbs saw justice for past wrongs in ethnic cleansing. Even many Nazi collaborators and appeasers were sure they were doing the right thing; after all, what could be more moral than "peace in our time"? In 1940, the poet Archibald MacLeish wrote, "Murder is not absolved of immorality by committing murder. Murder is absolved of immorality by bringing men to think that murder is not evil. This only the perversion of the mind can bring about. And the perversion of the mind is only possible when those who should be heard in its defense are silent." The lesson for us now is that the longer the illusion of evil as somehow justified lasts—whether buttressed by propaganda, ignorance, convenience, or fear—the harder it is to dispel. That is why we must take nothing for granted. We must be relentless in shaping a global consensus that terrorism is fully, fundamentally, and always wrong. No exceptions, no excuses.

I made this argument to Arab leaders many times when I was secretary of state. Their responses, however, were rarely satisfactory. Most often, my interlocutors would condemn terror unconditionally before commenting parenthetically on the legitimacy of the struggle to free occupied Arab lands. In other words, terrorism was despicable—except where it was most regularly practiced, namely in and against Israel. To this day, it remains the majority Arab view that the militarily overmatched Palestinians are justified in fighting Israelis with whatever means they have. On the issue of terrorist financing, the answers I received were equally inadequate. When I confronted one Saudi leader about payments to Hamas, he said they were merited because Hamas, unlike Yasir Arafat and his government, actually delivered social services to the Palestinian people. As for payments to the families of suicide bombers, those were justified not as an enticement or a reward but as a humanitarian gesture.

The attitude of Arab conservatives toward the terrorism practiced by al Qaeda is another matter. Bin Laden is the cobra that turned on its master. The teaching of Wahhabi Islam in Saudi Arabia's mosques, generously supported by the royal family, has combined with a mix of other factors (globalization, rising unemployment, and the U.S. military presence) to create a global center for the dissemination of hatred. To the discomfort of Saudi leaders, that hatred is now directed not only at the United States and Israel, but also at them. The three explosions set off in Riyadh in May killed 34 people, and hopefully destroyed the last set of lingering Saudi illusions as well. The Saudis have since arrested more than a dozen suspects, fired hundreds of radical clerics, and suspended a thousand more. They also claim to have implemented new regulations designed to prevent the flow of charitable contributions from Saudis overseas to terrorist groups. At the same time, however, the country's leading liberal newspaper editor recently lost his job for seeming to suggest there was a connection between terror and what is being taught in radical mosques. As his firing suggests, the fight for the collective heart and mind of Saudi Arabia has barely begun. Crown Prince Abdullah and his successors must do more than simply condemn extremism and terror; they must rip them out by roots that have become deeply implanted in the kingdom's sandy soil.

Osama bin Laden is the cobra that turned on its master.

Even if the Saudis succeed in such efforts, the roots of terror will continue to throw up shoots elsewhere. The Iraqi imam quoted at the beginning of this article did not explicitly advocate terror in his speech, but he did use the kind of clash-of-civilizations terminology that tends to make Samuel Huntington look retrospectively prescient. The "with us or against us" choice put forward by President Bush has been pulled apart and reassembled, with Islam taking the high ground and with alleged American evil substituted for the real evil: terror. This bit of sophistry illustrates the immense difficulty the United States will have trying to categorize Iraqis on the basis of whether they are willing to cooperate openly with the United States. Iraqis, and Arabs more generally, need the space to design their own choices free from the diktats of authoritarian leaders and notwithstanding the

preferences of the United States (provided those choices exclude violence, include tolerance, and are fair to women). This will, I concede, be no simple matter to put into practice.

There are, however, grounds for hope. It is true that the Pew survey found widespread antipathy toward American policies, especially in the Middle East. But it also found widespread enthusiasm among Arab populations for values closely associated with the United States, such as freedom of expression, political pluralism, and equal treatment under the law. Solid majorities in places such as Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco now believe that Western-style democracy would work well in their countries. And since democracy is built from the bottom up, one step at a time, U.S. leaders have an opportunity (risky as it is) to go around Arab governments to find values in common with the much-vaunted "Arab street." Washington might, for example, spend less time condemning what the Qatar-based independent al Jazeera television network chooses to broadcast and more time acknowledging the importance of its right to choose and encouraging other media outlets to start up.

Although I was proud of the Clinton administration's foreign policy, and I understand that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, I regret not having done more to push for liberalization within the Arab world. We did nudge at times, supporting Kuwaiti leaders in their initiative to give women the vote and encouraging the creation of representative bodies in Bahrain and Jordan. But we did not make it a priority. Arab public opinion, after all, can be rather scary. The same Pew survey that detected Arab enthusiasm for democracy also found that the "world leader" in whom Palestinians have the most confidence is Osama bin Laden. Who wants to give people with such opinions the right to choose their own leaders? The answer is us: we should do everything possible to see that they are given that right.

For years, Arab populations have received a distorted message from Washington: that the United States stands for democracy, freedom, and human rights everywhere except in the Middle East and for everyone except the Arabs. The time has come to erase that perception and the reality that too often lies behind it. Democracy will not end terrorism in the Arab world, but neither will it nourish it, as despotism does. Bin Laden's appeal is based on what he symbolizes: defiance. In

fact, he offers nothing except death and destruction, and Muslim majorities will reject this if they are offered real alternatives.

Indeed, democratization is the most intriguing part of the administration's gamble in Iraq. The creation of a stable and united Iraqi democracy would be a tremendous accomplishment, with beneficial repercussions in other Arab societies. But was invading Iraq the right way to start building democratic momentum in the Arab world? The answer will depend on how divided Iraq remains, and how dicey the security situation becomes. U.S. soldiers will have a hard time democratizing Iraq if they are forced to remain behind walls and inside tanks. And U.S. officials will lack credibility preaching the virtues of freedom if they feel compelled to censor broadcasts, search houses, ban political parties, and repeatedly reject Iraqi demands for more complete self-rule. The Bush administration was determined to retain for itself the authority to supervise every aspect of Iraq's postwar transition. History will judge whether that was a wise decision, but I am reminded in this context of one of "Rumsfeld's Rules," the Pentagon chief's guide for wise public policy: "It is easier to get into something than to get out of it."

CHANGING DIRECTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A SECOND, concurrent test of Arab democratization is occurring within the Palestinian Authority, where the Bush administration deserves credit for pushing for reform of Palestinian institutions. The selection of Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and the appointment of Finance Minister Salam Fayyad are necessary steps toward democracy and sound governance. The creation of political freedom is essential to allow the emergence of a new generation of Palestinian leaders, comfortable with democratic ways. At the same time, democracy—if it does come—is unlikely to produce a Palestinian government willing to make peace on terms Israelis will accept, or at least not for many years. The Pew survey found that 80 percent of Palestinians do not believe they can realize their rights while coexisting with an Israeli state. That doubt is surely justified if Palestinian rights are thought to include the recovery of all lands taken during the 1967 war, full sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount), and the

right of Palestinian refugees to return to their pre-1948 homes. Unless those demands are modified, or the issues somehow sidestepped, the journey to a Middle East peace will stretch far beyond the boundaries envisioned in the current road map.

Making progress will therefore require new thinking on both sides. The Israelis must help Abbas to succeed in a way they never did with Arafat. This will mean recognizing the elementary fact that Abbas is accountable to the Palestinians, not to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon or Bush. Unless the new Palestinian regime is able to show greater results than Arafat delivered, Abbas will soon find himself a footnote to history.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, must reject terror—not because the United States or other outsiders want them to, but because terror, far more than Israel, is the enemy of the Palestinian people. It is destructive not only of the Palestinian economy and Palestinian territorial hopes, but of the people's very soul. Terror is a choice, and when people have the power to choose, they have the power to change. The Bush administration, European governments, the Arab world, and Palestinian moderates must all work to create a Palestinian consensus that excludes and excoriates terror. As long as murderers are hailed as martyrs, there can be no real peace, nor any Palestinian state worthy of the name.

The Israelis, too, must be wary of the impact of their own policies of aggressive self-defense. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir once said that she blamed Arabs less for killing Israelis than for making it necessary for Israelis to kill. Israel has a right to protect itself against terror and, at times, to take preemptive action. But it should never forget that it is destined to live next door to the Palestinians forever, sharing the same land. There is no military solution to that.

REFRAMING THE CHOICE

After September 11, President Bush asked the world to stand with the United States against the terrorists who had attacked the country. In the years since, however, he has broadened that request and altered its tone. No longer is Bush asking the world to join a common struggle; instead, he is demanding that it follow along as the United States wages its

own battle against threats the president has defined. September 11 proved, Bush has said, that the institutions, alliances, and rules of the past are no longer adequate to protect the American people. Terrorists who cannot be deterred are on the loose. If they gain access to WMD, unspeakable horrors will ensue. And so the United States, Bush has warned, will act when and where it perceives an actual, possible, or potential connection between terrorists and dangerous technology. Those who join it will be rewarded. Those who do not will be scorned, and worse.

I credit Bush for his ambition and for taking political risks he did not have to take. I harbor no doubts about his sincerity. I agree with him that the United States cannot be complacent. I share his assessment of the need not simply to oppose but also to defeat the declared enemies of the country. For the good of the United States, I hope his policies succeed. But I am left with the feeling that he has needlessly placed obstacles in his own path.

After all, the attacks of September 11 were dramatic and shocking, but hardly the first time this country has realized the extreme danger it will face if it allows WMD to fall into the wrong hands. President Bill Clinton warned regularly of that very thing. One of his earliest accomplishments was to persuade Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus to give up their nuclear weapons. He promoted the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program tirelessly, spending American money to secure nuclear materials and expertise throughout the former Soviet Union. Clinton made himself an expert on the threat of a biological weapons attack on U.S. soil. He reorganized the National Security Council to broaden and intensify the fight against terrorism months before the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania brought global notoriety to bin Laden. Year after year, Clinton traveled to the UN in New York to emphasize two themes: the importance of halting WMD proliferation and the need for nations to unite in eliminating terrorist sanctuaries and funding. But President Clinton differed from his successor in that he believed the United States' ability to beat the country's enemies would be strengthened if NATO were strong and united, UN agencies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency were enhanced, and America's friends around the world were consulted and respected. Clinton saw fighting terror as a team enterprise, not a solo act.

September 11 showed that what the United States had been doing to identify and defeat al Qaeda was not enough. It did not, however, discredit the premise that to defeat al Qaeda, Americans need the active help and cooperation of other countries.

The Bush administration has chosen to take the problem of al Qaeda and meld it with the challenge of halting WMD proliferation—two issues that overlap but are by no means identical in the military, political, and technical issues they raise. Defeating al Qaeda would not end the problem of proliferation; al Qaeda is deadly even without nuclear, chemical, and biological arms. Meanwhile, the nuclear programs of North Korea and Iran are driven by nationalism, not terrorism, and must be dealt with primarily on that basis. September 11, the administration's eureka moment, caused it to lump together terrorists and rogue regimes and to come up with a prescription for fighting them—namely, preemption—that frightens and divides the world at precisely the moment U.S. security depends on bringing people together.

Bush has melded the problem of al Qaeda with the challenge of halting WMD proliferation.

I believe a different approach, focused more sharply and insistently on al Qaeda, with the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea treated vigorously but separately, might have yielded a better result. Such an approach would, I believe, have enabled Bush to formulate a much clearer choice on the core issue of terror for allies in Europe and for the most critical audience of all: the sometimes silent majority of Muslims in the Middle East and around the world. The seriousness of that choice would have been backed under this scenario by Washington's own seriousness in Afghanistan, which would have remained the focus of U.S. nation-building efforts. Rather than flaunting American power, the U.S. government would have stressed the collective power of a world united in asserting that terrorism is wrong, just as genocide, apartheid, and slavery are wrong. U.S. efforts would have been directed not simply at the apprehension of al Qaeda suspects, but also at stopping the teaching of hate, the glorification of murder, and the endless manufacture of lies about the West that continues to this day in much of the Middle East and South Asia. Reinforced

by a united Europe, American officials would have pressed over time for the gradual opening of Arab political and economic systems and for support for the democratic changes that surveys suggest most Arabs want. Washington would also have shown its respect for the value of every human life by staying engaged on a daily basis in the uphill struggle to halt killing on both sides in the strife-torn Middle East.

By complicating its own choice, the administration has instead complicated the choices faced by others, divided Europe, and played into the hands of extremists who would like nothing better than to make the clash of civilizations the defining struggle of our age.

It is late, but not too late, for the Bush administration to adjust its course. It has already shed some of its more optimistic illusions about Iraq, pledged presidential involvement in the Middle East, mended some fences with Europe, and reduced the level of self-congratulation in its official pronouncements.

It would be helpful now if the doctrine of preemption were to disappear quietly from the U.S. national security lexicon and be returned to reserve status. It is imperative, as well, that the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq actually be completed before victory is once again declared. To that end, perhaps administration officials will recognize that although none of the existing international institutions can do everything, each can do something. Perhaps the United States' current leaders will even put aside their reflexive disdain for all things Clintonian and consider the model of Kosovo. There, a NATO-led peacekeeping force, with Russian participation and assisted by a new civilian police force, is providing security for administrators from the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who are working with local parties to prepare a democratic transition. Not only is this setup operating fairly well, it has also given everyone involved a sense of mission and a stake in success. It takes patience to work with allies and to bring out the best in international organizations. But doing so also delivers great benefits: costs are shared, burdens distributed, legitimacy enhanced, diverse talents engaged. And everyone joins in wanting success.

Finally, the administration should do more of what President Bush did during his recent, welcome trip to Africa—play to the United States' true strengths. The idea that Americans—residents of the most powerful land in history—are now truly living in fear of bin Laden has failed to impress the majority of people around the globe, whose concerns about terrorism are dwarfed by the challenge they face in simply staying alive despite the ever-present perils of poverty, hunger, and disease. The United States' cause would therefore be heard more clearly and listened to more closely if the administration substituted bridges for bluster and spoke more often of choices relevant to the day-to-day lives of more of the world's people. That means spelling out consistently not only what Americans are against, but also what they are for, and making clear that this includes helping people everywhere live richer, freer, and longer lives.

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