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**‘The use of the word “doctrine” is intentional’: Presidential Doctrines and  
the Legitimation of Foreign Policy Choices, 1981 – 2009**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Humanities

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## Acknowledgements

Being told in secondary school that I would not achieve much, I could never have imagined writing and submitting a PhD, co-authoring a publication with a major U.K. publishing house, and conducting interviews with people who have served in the highest levels of American government and media. I am incredibly proud of myself for getting to this moment as I have given my absolute all to this thesis. However, these achievements would not have been possible without the guidance and emotional support of important people in my life.

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strength to carry on even in my darkest moments of self-doubt, I would not be where I am today. Jodie, and our future family, are my biggest motivators.

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how the rhetorical use of presidential doctrines has facilitated and undermined the legitimation of presidential policy choices. Through the interrogation of the historical record and the author's conduct of oral history interviews with former administration officials, political commentators, and journalists this thesis reveals they do so in the following ways. Doctrines can sustain the effort to legitimize policy choices by being characterized, explicitly or implicitly, as necessary repudiations of purportedly redundant frameworks for American foreign policy. Doctrines can undermine the effort to legitimize policy choices by being characterized as inconsistently executed in practice or as being based upon morally and/or strategically fallacious assumptions. By tracing how doctrines were conferred upon statements and policy choices, were demanded by actors in media and politics to be clearly defined, and why certain administrations were associated or dissociated with doctrines during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, the study sheds new light on the legitimizing and delegitimizing functions of presidential doctrines in the national debate about presidential leadership in American foreign policy.

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## **Abbreviations**

C.B.S. – Columbia Broadcasting System

C.C. – Central Committee

C.P. – Communist Party

C.I.A. – Central Intelligence Agency

C.N.N. – Cable News Network

F.R.Y. – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

G.O.P. – Grand Old Party (Republican Party)

L.B.J – Lyndon Baines Johnson

NAFTA – North American Free Trade Association

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

N.B.C. – National Broadcasting Corporation

N.I.E. – National Intelligence Estimate

N.P.R. – National Public Radio

N.S.C. – National Security Council

N.S.D.D. – National Security Decision Directive

N.S.P.G. – National Security Planning Group

P.M. – Prime Minister

PNAC – Project for a New American Century

P.N.I. – Presidential Nuclear Initiatives

R.S.F.S.R. – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

S.D.I. – Strategic Defense Initiative

U.K. – United Kingdom

U.N. – United Nations

U.S. – United States

U.S.I.A. – United States Information Agency

U.S.S.R. – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

W.M.D. – Weapons of Mass Destruction

## Introduction

The word *doctrine* emanates from the Latin word *doctrina* which translates to an instruction and/or teaching. Cambridge Dictionary defines the word as ‘a belief or set of beliefs, especially political or religious ones, that are taught and accepted by a particular group.’<sup>1</sup> A political doctrine is defined as a ‘policy, position or principle advocated, taught or put into effect concerning the acquisition and exercise of the power to govern or administrate in society.’<sup>2</sup> Presidential doctrines are distinct since they symbolize the elaborated beliefs, principles, and policy choices of one individual. They are, thus, intimately intertwined with the power and authority of that individual: the president of the United States. In this light, Jeffrey Michaels identified that, unlike other types of doctrines, presidential doctrines occupy a special place in American political culture due to their discursive association with the president, and how they reflect the power of the presidency in foreign policymaking.<sup>3</sup>

Although the definitional debates surrounding presidential doctrines are wide and varied, there are commonalities that commentators agree on.<sup>4</sup> ‘In the broadest sense,’ Warren & Siracusa write, ‘presidential foreign policy doctrines, like much of presidential rhetoric, have a defensive and explanatory component that serves to defend actions already underway or to persuade others to support new plans.’<sup>5</sup> Though presidential doctrines have come to define significant shifts in foreign policy practice, the scholarship lacks a normative

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, ‘Doctrine,’ - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/doctrine>

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey E. Michaels, ‘Dysfunctional Doctrines? Eisenhower, Carter and U.S. Military Intervention in the Middle East,’ *Political Science Quarterly* 126:3 (2011), 465-492 (p. 465). Within the broader scholarship of American politics, it is taken as an axiom that the president is deemed the most significant actor in the formulation and execution of foreign affairs. See: Mareike Oldemeinen. ‘How Dominant is the President in Foreign Policy Decision Making?’ *E-International Relations* (2012), 1-8; Paul E. Peterson. ‘The President’s Dominance in Foreign Policy Making.’ *Political Science Quarterly* 109:2 (1994), 215-234; Adam L. Warber, Yu Ouyang & Richard W. Waterman. ‘Landmark Executive Orders: Presidential Leadership Through Unilateral Action.’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 48:1 (2018), 110-126.

<sup>4</sup> Aiden Warren & Joseph M. Siracusa, *Understanding Presidential Doctrines: U.S. National Security from George Washington to Joe Biden* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), p. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. xiii.

definition as ‘more or less every single post-World War II president on some occasion has been associated with a doctrine.’<sup>6</sup> Mary Ann Heiss observed that presidential doctrines are ‘enunciated in a variety of media.’<sup>7</sup> Whatever the form, Heiss noted, ‘they were all performative pieces crafted with the express purpose of advancing a foreign policy goal or principle. They carry no force of international law.’<sup>8</sup> Thereby, according to John Dumbrell, what ‘most presidential doctrines seem to amount to, in fact, are unilateral warnings to enemies.’<sup>9</sup>

Rexford Barton described the presidential doctrine as serving ‘to define the national interest of a specific administration in a public manner, informing the American people and their allies, as well as putting adversaries on notice.’<sup>10</sup> Barton argued that there is a commonality in the fact that they each convey a purpose for policy.<sup>11</sup> From these characteristics, presidential doctrines not only reflect the power of the president in foreign policymaking, but are also interrelated with the concept of grand strategy.<sup>12</sup> Grand strategy is broadly defined as the intellectual architecture that gives form and structure to foreign policy and is the ‘logic that helps states navigate a complex and dangerous world.’<sup>13</sup> Grand strategy can be seen ‘as the highest level of foreign policy representing a comprehensive vision of the state’s critical interests and how best to promote and achieve them.’<sup>14</sup> Hal Brands notes that

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<sup>6</sup> Roxanna Sjöstedt, ‘The Discursive Origins of a Doctrine: Norms, Identity, and Securitization under Harry S. Truman and George W. Bush,’ *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3:3 (2007), 233-254 (p. 235).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Ann Heiss, ‘Presidential Cold War Doctrines: What Are They Good For?’ *Diplomatic History* 48:1 (2024), 1-19 (p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Heiss, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> John Dumbrell, ‘Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton’s Foreign Policy Reconsidered,’ *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13:2 (2002), 43-56 (p. 45).

<sup>10</sup> Rexford Barton, ‘What is a Presidential Doctrine?’ *The Strategy Bridge* (May 3, 2017) - <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/5/3/what-is-a-presidential-doctrine>

<sup>11</sup> Barton, ‘What is a Presidential Doctrine?’

<sup>12</sup> Lamont Colucci, ‘American Doctrine: The Foundation of Grand Strategy,’ *World Affairs* 181:2 (2018), 133-160.

<sup>13</sup> Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy?: Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 1; John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (New York: Penguin, 2018); Paul Kennedy (ed), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Bastiaan van Apeldoorn & Naná de Graaff, *American Grand Strategy and Corporate Elite Networks: The Open Door since the End of the Cold War* (Amsterdam: Taylor Francis, 2016), p. 7.

some ‘observers associate grand strategy with explicit “doctrines” and “national security strategies”; others contend that most grand strategies are more implicit and assumed than formally enunciated.’<sup>15</sup> In sum, since precisely identifying and defining concepts such as presidential doctrines and grand strategy often raises more questions than the definitions answer, this indicates that there are deficiencies in the methods used by scholars to define and operationalize these concepts.

Richard K. Betts, writing about the rapid growth of usage of the term ‘grand strategy’ and the ever-widening variety of purposes to which it was applied, suggested that it was a buzzword.<sup>16</sup> Nina Silove sought to go beyond the buzzword by developing a theory of the concept and argued that it evolved to have three distinct meanings.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, the concept is used to refer to deliberate and detailed plans devised by individuals; secondly, scholars employ the term to define an organising principle that is held and used by individuals to guide their decisions; thirdly, the term is utilized to refer to patterns in state behaviour.<sup>18</sup> As it relates to deliberate and detailed plans devised by individuals, Warren and Siracusa maintained that the doctrinal drive in articulating the direction of American foreign policy ‘had long embodied the desire to maintain a “balance of influence” in meeting U.S. core national-interest objectives.’<sup>19</sup>

However, the former National Security Coordinator for Counterterrorism from 1998 to 2003, Richard Clarke, told the author in an interview for this study that most presidents do not say they have their own doctrines.<sup>20</sup> As a subsequent section shall show, this is for two main reasons. Firstly, because they make it harder to legitimize a shift in policy, if necessary,

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<sup>15</sup> Brands, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Richard K. Betts, ‘The Trouble with Strategy: Bridging Policy and Operations,’ *Joint Forces Quarterly* 29 (2001–2002), 23–30 (p. 23). - <https://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/01jfqbetts.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Nina Silove, ‘Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of “Grand Strategy,”’ *Security Studies* 27:1 (2018), 27–57 (p. 29).

<sup>18</sup> Silove, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

due to the risk of contradicting the doctrine that was publicly endorsed as meaning adherence to a particular set of policy practices in particular circumstances. Secondly, because they are largely constructed by third party actors in the media.<sup>21</sup> The literature on presidential doctrines thus requires development for two principal reasons.

First, the concept of the presidential doctrine has not been comprehensively investigated as it pertains to their contemporaneous rhetorical use. As Roxanna Sjöstedt put it: the focus on the content of doctrines is ‘incommensurate, since reaching a comprehensive understanding of U.S. security policy requires an analysis beyond the effects of a doctrine. We should, in other words, also analyze how doctrines become possible.’<sup>22</sup> In this light, the literature is missing a study that comprehensively studies, from an historical perspective, why actors in media and politics seek their enunciation, why some administrations endorse or reject becoming associated with explicit doctrines, how their definitional understandings become rhetorically weaponized, and consequently what this all says about their role in sustaining and undermining the legitimation of foreign policy choices.<sup>23</sup> Filling the gap within the literature on doctrines necessitates centralising these concerns. When scholars write about a particular presidential doctrine, they often take its rhetorical style for granted without paying much attention as to why, and the context within which, policies, directives, memoranda, statements, and/or decisions became contemporarily framed as the president’s

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<sup>21</sup> Amy Skonieczny, ‘Constructing NAFTA: Myth, Representation, and the Discursive Construction of U.S. Foreign Policy,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 45:3 (2001), 433-454. Questions pertaining to how something becomes possible ‘inquire into the representations of policy that underlie how knowledge is produced and comprehended and how these representations make certain actions possible.’

<sup>22</sup> Sjöstedt, p. 234.

<sup>23</sup> Julia Azari, ‘Defending the Nation, Defending Themselves: The Politics of Presidential Doctrines,’ *Washington Monthly* (May 30, 2014) - <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2014/05/30/defending-the-nation-defending-themselves-the-politics-of-presidential-doctrines/>; H. W. Brands, ‘Presidential Doctrines: An Introduction,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (2006), 1-4; Lamont Colucci, ‘American Doctrine: The Foundation of Grand Strategy,’ *World Affairs* 181:2 (2018), 133-160; Cecil V. Crabb, *The Doctrines of American Foreign Policy: Their Meaning, Role, and Future* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Dario Lisiero, *American Doctrine* (New York, 2008).

‘doctrine’, and consequently defined by the beholder.<sup>24</sup> This thesis will centralize this as a concern in an attempt to understand what consequences flow from attaching this label for the legitimacy of presidential action in foreign policy.

Secondly, the broader literature has not found it easy to understand the doctrinal legacy of previous administrations because, some argue, even though many become associated with a doctrine, it has not been self-evident which presidents had doctrines or not.<sup>25</sup> These debates are, however, problematic because the degree to which presidents establish a set of fixed principles to be implemented varies, and even those presidents considered dominant in agenda-setting (ideologically), such as Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush, nevertheless still weighed decisions based on merit.<sup>26</sup> During a 2009 interview with National Public Radio, Paul Wolfowitz, former Director of Policy Planning under Ronald Reagan and Under-Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush stated that, ‘Look, I think the notion that there’s a dogma or doctrine of foreign policy that gives you a textbook recipe for how to react to all situations is really nonsense.’<sup>27</sup> Contrarily, those presidents considered more pragmatic, such as George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, still provided consistent indications about their administrations’ goals and initiatives in national security and foreign policy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Crabb, p. 394. Writing in 1982, Cecil Crabb noted that from the Monroe doctrine to the Carter doctrine, students of American foreign relations have been puzzled about the meaning of certain doctrines ‘and perhaps the cumulative impact of them collectively for the conduct of foreign affairs. A common feature of these doctrines has been their highly ambivalent and flexible character.’

<sup>25</sup> O. Aziz & D. G. Haglund, ‘An Obama Doctrine?’ in Michael P. Cullinane & Clare Francis Elliot, *Perspectives on Presidential Leadership* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 216-217.

<sup>26</sup> James Bilsland, *The President, the State, and the Cold War: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Presidents Truman and Reagan* (Glasgow: Routledge, 2013), pp. 263-264.; Hoover Institution, ‘Interview with Condoleezza Rice,’ *Hoover Institution* (2012) - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzu\\_QZaUbPQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzu_QZaUbPQ). At 21:58 into the video, National Security Adviser under George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice, stated in an interview in 2012 that ‘President Bush did not much like the notion of doctrines.’ This is despite Bush invoking the language of ‘doctrine’ more frequently than any other president under study in this thesis.

<sup>27</sup> National Public Radio, ‘Interview: Wolfowitz on U.S. Role in Other Nations’ Affairs,’ *All Things Considered*, September 5, 2009. - <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112591394>

<sup>28</sup> Madeleine K. Albright, ‘Doing the Right Thing in a Pragmatic Way,’ in Rosanna Perotti (ed.), *Presidency in the United States: Foreign Policy in the Clinton Administration*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019), pp. 11-12.

Consequently, Meiertons suggested that the use of the term ‘doctrine’ is not uniform because ‘in many cases it refers only to a legally irrelevant, journalistic simplification of an explicitly declared or implied principle of American foreign policy.’<sup>29</sup> For example, the literature has not been able to determine why some presidents have become popularly associated with a foreign policy axiom named after them, and others have not – despite others having declared such axioms. In September 1796, George Washington composed his farewell address to the nation to inspire and guide future generations. He wrote that, ‘It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements.’<sup>30</sup> Over two hundred and twenty years later, American legislators are still quoting and re-reading the farewell address on Washington’s birthday and statesmen and legislators excoriate each other for departing from its wisdom about the national interest.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, if a doctrine is generally defined as ‘a belief or set of beliefs, especially political or religious ones, that are taught and accepted by a particular group,’ in hindsight Washington’s address was the America’s first *bona fide* presidential doctrine.<sup>32</sup> No one at the time described this as the Washington doctrine, nor has the literature – broadly speaking – labelled it as such or identified it as America’s first presidential doctrine.

This is because it was not until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that the American press began to evoke the term ‘doctrine’ in their judgements of, and attempts to categorize, presidential statements. Many consider the Monroe doctrine to have ‘established a rhetorical style

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<sup>29</sup> Heiko Meiertons, *The Doctrines of U.S. Security Policy: An Evaluation under International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> George Washington, Farewell Address, September 17, 1796. *The American Presidency Project* - <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address>

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, ‘Reading of Washington’s Farewell Address; Congressional Record Vol. 170, No. 34 (Senate – February 26, 2024), pp. S971-S976. - <https://www.congress.gov/118/crec/2024/02/26/170/34/CREC-2024-02-26-pt1-PgS971-2.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Cambridge Dictionary; Paul Carrese, ‘The Grand Strategy of Washington and Eisenhower: Recovering the American Consensus,’ *Orbis* 59:2 (2015), 269-286.

associated many years later with similar pronouncements during the Cold War and after.’<sup>33</sup> This was not the case. Throughout James Monroe’s presidency (1817-25), and after his 1823 address to Congress outlining his principles of non-intervention and America’s unwillingness to accept European conquest in the western hemisphere, no newspapers or legislators ever spoke or evoked the label ‘Monroe doctrine.’<sup>34</sup> Monroe’s address to Congress was not known as a doctrine until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> In turn, the available newspaper records show that the term ‘doctrine’ was first used in the critique of presidential leadership in 1814 to scrutinize President James Madison’s (1809-17) diplomacy toward Europe when the commentator wrote that, ‘Mr. Madison’s new doctrine of allegiance and protection which strikes at the root cause of all government has been the real cause of this universal feeling toward the United States. His principles are at war with those of every government in Europe.’<sup>36</sup> It was, nonetheless, during the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829-37) which established the rhetorical style that was popularized by the construction of the Monroe doctrine in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

In June 1831, Indiana’s *Western Statesman* reported on a caucus nomination in the legislature and the disagreements about candidates’ nominations dropping out and, therefore, ‘We insist upon it, that, according to the Jackson doctrine, a reorganization should take

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<sup>33</sup> Daniel P. Erikson, ‘Requiem for the Monroe Doctrine,’ *Current History* 107:706 (2008), 58-64 (p. 58); Mark T. Gilderhus, ‘The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (2006), 5-16 (p. 5); Doctrines – The Monroe Doctrine, *American Foreign Relations* - <https://www.americanforeignrelations.com/A-D/Doctrines-The-monroe-doctrine.html>;

<sup>34</sup> ‘President James Monroe’s Seventh Annual Message to Congress: Transcript of the Monroe Doctrine,’ December 2, 1823. - <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=23&page=transcript>; Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Sexton, p. 3; Alex Byrne, *The Monroe Doctrine and United States National Security in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Tom Bowline, ‘Extraordinary Effects of Trepidation,’ *The Gleaner* (November 11, 1814), p. 1. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/390107728/?terms=Madison%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>37</sup> Sexton, p. 3. Jay Sexton, writing on the historical construction of the doctrine, stated that, ‘The open-ended nature of the seemingly direct 1823 message foreshadowed the elasticity and political unity of what became known in the mid-nineteenth century as the Monroe Doctrine...The construction of the Monroe Doctrine was like a never-ending building project: upon the foundations of the 1823 message, Americans built larger, more elaborate structures, only to have political opponents or subsequent generations renovate or even demolish and rebuild what lay before them.’

place.’<sup>38</sup> This referred to Jackson’s commitment to further democratize the American political system in favour of majority rule, as it pertained to voting for presidential candidates, because after the War of 1812, ‘King Caucus effectively selected the nation’s President.’<sup>39</sup> During Jackson’s battle with the National Bank, one periodical read that Jacksonism was a ‘disease of the mind’ and that ‘it occurred to my mind to examine the Jackson doctrine...The doctrine teaches reform and economy, but spends many millions more of Uncle Sam’s money than the preceding administration.’<sup>40</sup> Thus, debates about presidential doctrines are often semantic due to varying conceptual understandings of the term *doctrine* and the rhetorical and political motivations surrounding its use. It is now important for a study to move beyond quibbling over the boundaries of that term’s definition to investigate how the perceived existence of presidential doctrines, or lack thereof, throughout the presidencies in question worked to sustain and also undermine the administration’s efforts to legitimize its policy choices.

Going beyond conceptualizing doctrines as unilateral statements of purpose intended to put potential enemies and allies on notice about America’s intentions, albeit with no standing in international law, the study aims to uncover the subjective and politicized nature of identifying and defining a president’s purported doctrines. By examining how various actors in media and politics have discursively wielded presidential doctrines, the study unveils how this mode of discourse (e.g., the ‘Reagan doctrine,’ the ‘Clinton doctrine,’ and the ‘Bush doctrine’ etc.) has been used to rationalize and also scrutinize foreign policy decisions. As such, the following research questions define the project:

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<sup>38</sup> ‘The Statesman, Lawrenceburg, Indiana,’ *The Western Statesman* (June 3, 1831), p. 2. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/821793004/?terms=Jackson%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>39</sup> Yoo, p. 147.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Telegraph, ‘Anti-Jackson Medicine: A Cheap and Certain Cure for Jacksonism,’ *Martinsburg Gazette* (September 27, 1832), p. 1. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/897512044/?terms=Jackson%20doctrine&match=1>

- i) To what extent did broader perceptions regarding the existence of a presidential doctrine, or lack thereof, contribute to the legitimation or delegitimization of an administration's policy choices?
- ii) How have agents within the polity – whether in the press, within an administration, or those in Congress – characterized presidential doctrines when they were either rationalizing the president's efforts in foreign policy or criticizing them?
- iii) Why did the administrations under study either endorse or reject framing their decisions as constituting a doctrine?

By addressing these research questions, this thesis explores the complex interplay between the framing of distinctive presidential doctrines and the legitimation of policy decisions. It uses the historical record and oral history to provide a conceptual understanding regarding how presidential doctrines serve and undermine their namesake's interests – in the discourse – to advance their desired courses of action.

## **Literature Review**

The collective study of doctrines has largely been the province of international relations scholars whereas 'historians have primarily considered individual doctrines in relative isolation from each other.'<sup>70</sup> In this way, Meiertons notes that other works on presidential doctrines usually 'offer only an historical description of single U.S. doctrines.'<sup>71</sup> To gain a more comprehensive historical understanding about how doctrines work for and against the

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<sup>70</sup> Heiss, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Meiertons, p. 5.

interests of presidents, it is necessary to study doctrines collectively. This necessitates a periodization which encapsulates how the evolution of American presidential doctrines was affected by the broader changes in the polity's ideas about how to translate American power in the world at different inflection points in history. The period under study was characterized by the end of Cold War bipolarity, the emergence of the United States as a sole superpower, and the subsequent challenges of unipolarity and global terrorism.<sup>72</sup> In turn, this periodization move the scholarly literature on presidential doctrines onward from the Cold War – a period upon which most studies on doctrines have focused. However, the period from 1981 to 2009 was pivotal not only for the historical developments in American foreign policy, but also in presidential leadership more broadly. By the development of presidential leadership, one refers to how, within a particular period, presidents seriously think about their place in history and engage 'in genuinely deep and sometimes philosophical thought about the nature of the American regime as well as the constitutional and political dilemmas it poses to purposeful presidential action.'<sup>73</sup> This is for three main reasons.

Firstly, in certain respects the period of 1981 to 2009 constituted, according to Sean Wilentz, the *Age of Reagan*.<sup>74</sup> While Wilentz chronicles the *Age* to have begun in 1974 after the Watergate scandal until 2008 when Barack Obama (2009-2017) was elected president during which the United States witnessed the triumph of political conservatism. Reagan won the presidency in 1980 by tapping into widespread dissatisfaction with both parties; conservatives opposed détente under Nixon and Ford, while liberals criticized Carter's handling of the economy and social issues.<sup>75</sup> Reagan provided a clear conservative message

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<sup>72</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018).

<sup>73</sup> Sidney M. Milkis, 'The Presidency and American Political Development: The Advent – and Illusion – of an Executive-Centered Democracy,' in R. Valelly, S. Mettler, & R. Lieberman, *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development* (London, 2016), p. 286.

<sup>74</sup> Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008).

<sup>75</sup> Joe Foote & Kevin Curran, 'Ronald Reagan Radio Broadcasts (1976-1979),' *The Library of Congress -* <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/ReaganOnRadio.pdf>. Reagan's media adviser, Michael Deaver, once told the *Los Angeles Times* that, 'In my opinion, Ronald Reagan

and sought to shatter the politics of the past to ‘orchestrate the establishment of a new coalition and enshrine their commitments as the restoration of original values, thereby resetting the very terms and conditions of constitutional government.’<sup>76</sup>

As Skowronek argued, ‘Each of Reagan’s successors has been subject to political expectations that he set; everyone has tested and manipulated standards that he established.’<sup>77</sup> For example, as will be shown in future chapters, a major issue for George H.W Bush in sustaining his leadership authority was the difficulty of defining himself in relation to Reagan’s overbearing shadow in foreign and domestic policy; ultimately, his perceived betrayal of the Reagan Revolution, through his raising of taxes and advancing a pragmatic yet unlofty form of conservatism, contributed to his declining support amongst conservatives.<sup>78</sup> Clinton and his New Democrats sought to shift the Democratic Party away from its insistence on pacifism abroad and social programmes at home, such as welfare, to reshape the party in accordance with the changes in American politics and economics made by Reagan; leading Jack Godwin to write *How Bill Clinton Reengineered the Reagan Revolution* by further modernizing the federal government by continuing to trim the fat from it through budget cuts, as well as continuing Reagan’s deregulatory trajectory vis a vis Wall Street.<sup>79</sup>

George W. Bush, in relation to this conservative party-regime established by Reagan, has been characterized as an ‘orthodox-innovator’ who sought to broaden the appeal of the dominant conservative regime which Reagan had established through constructing new and broader appeals to conservatism, as Lyndon Johnson (1963-1969) had done for Franklin

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got elected because he was on the radio every day for nearly five years talking to 50 million people a week.’ It was during these addresses from 1975 to 1979 that Reagan constantly criticized the decayed liberal regime and the weak foreign policies of the 1970s.

<sup>76</sup> Sidney M. Milkis, ‘The Presidency and American Political Development: The Advent – and Illusion – of an Executive-Centered Democracy,’ p. 291.

<sup>77</sup> Skowronek (ed), p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Mark J. Rozell, ‘In Reagan’s Shadow: Bush’s Antirhetorical Presidency,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28:1 (1998), 127-138.

<sup>79</sup> Jack Godwin, *Clintonomics: How Bill Clinton Reengineered the Reagan Revolution* (New York: American Management Association, 2009). It was during Clinton, for example, that the derivatives market was deregulated which precipitated the sub-prime mortgage crisis.

Roosevelt's (1933-1945) established – yet fatigued – New Deal liberal regime, such as through 'compassionate conservatism.'<sup>80</sup> Thus, Lou Cannon once referred to George W. Bush as *Reagan's Disciple*.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, in terms of how the game of political definition played out during and throughout these presidencies, it was highly informed by the legacy set by, and the political shadow of, Reagan.<sup>82</sup> Not only was this shadow cast through Reagan establishing a new conceptual foundation for government based on limited government, but paradoxically through his reassertion of presidential power and executive autonomy after its curtailment during the 1970s post-Watergate reforms.

During the 1970s, there was fear that the presidency had become imperial because the office had usurped too much power that was not granted within the Constitution.<sup>83</sup> After the abuses of presidential authority came to light in the wake of Watergate, a congressional resurgence regime arose to reclaim those powers lost since the creation of the national security state during the early Cold War period.<sup>84</sup> In 1981, the year during which Reagan assumed the presidency, James Sundquist wrote an influential book regarding the *Decline and Resurgence of Congress*, arguing that Congress had recaptured powers and responsibilities that it had surrendered to the presidency in recent decades through the

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<sup>80</sup> Skowronek (ed), p. 143.

<sup>81</sup> Lou Cannon & Carl M. Cannon, *Reagan's Disciple: George W. Bush's Troubled Quest for a Presidential Legacy* (New York: Public Affairs U.S., 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Michael Duffy & Michael Scherer, 'The Role Model: What Obama Sees in Reagan,' *Time* (January 27, 2011) - <https://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044712,00.html>. Barack Obama was also quoted for giving lip-service to Ronald Reagan for being a transformational presidency, and his legacy, for reshaping the nation and its politics; Jay Willis, 'Donald Trump Loves Ronald Reagan, Even Though Reagan Never Liked Him Back,' *GQ* (January 9, 2017) - <https://www.gq.com/story/ronald-reagan-donald-trump-failed-bromance>; Thomas B. Edsall, 'The Fight Over How Trump Fits in With the Other 44 Presidents,' *The New York Times* (May 15, 2019) - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/15/opinion/trump-history-presidents.html>. Trump has been occasionally judged as the last president of the Reagan era who tried to revive conservatism through appealing to Reagan's symbols, such as Make America Great Again, but with more populist characteristics which have come to define the current right-wing zeitgeist. Edsall, in adhering to Stephen Skowronek's regime theory of the presidency, wrote that, 'Trump represents the final collapse of Reagan-era conservatism.'

<sup>83</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973). The Watergate scandal (and the cover-up and subsequent investigation that followed), the actions of presidents in the conduct of the Vietnam War, and the bombing of Laos and Cambodia in unilateral fashion caused a political crisis which was recognized in both the political and academic arena.

<sup>84</sup> Andrew Rudalevige, "'The Contemporary Presidency': The Decline and Resurgence and Decline (and Resurgence?) of Congress: Charting a New Imperial Presidency,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:3 (2006), 506-524.

passage of acts such as 1973 War Powers Resolution, Hughes-Ryan Amendment of 1974, the Domestic Intelligence Guidelines of 1976, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, and the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980.<sup>85</sup> Such acts, Andrew Rudalevige argued, ‘aimed to limit the autonomy of executive branch law enforcement and intelligence activities at home and abroad.’<sup>86</sup> Reagan came to office wishing to roll-back this oversight over the executive; particularly in the execution of foreign policy.<sup>87</sup>

Although presidents prior to Reagan had invoked arguments to justify their broad uses of presidential power, such as executive privilege, Reagan began a trajectory – continued by his successors – in the post-Watergate era of appealing to a unitary executive theory and employing executive orders and presidential memoranda to centralize authority over policy as well as direct departments to act in ways which accorded with the White House’s will.<sup>88</sup> While studies on George W. Bush’s sweeping expansion of presidential power has been well studied, it did not occur in a vacuum.<sup>89</sup> This is because, as Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan posited, the employment of presidential unilateralism – in the form of appealing to the

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<sup>85</sup> James L. Sundquist, *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1981).

<sup>86</sup> Andrew Rudalevige. *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power after Watergate*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 7; J. Yoo, *Crisis and Command: A History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New Jersey: Kaplan Trade, 2011), p. 373.

<sup>87</sup> Rudalevige, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174. Another variant of memoranda deals with national security issues and ‘is normally drafted through the N.S.C. staffing process. National security directives – given different names by different administrations – are normally classified, and thus no good overall count can be made. But in the mid-1980s such directives underlay the policies in Iran and Nicaragua that ran afoul of the statutory bans on arms sales to terrorists and aid to the contras.’; William P. Marshall. ‘Eleven Reasons Why Presidential Power Inevitably Expands and Why It Matters.’ *Boston University Law Review* 88:1 (2008), 505-522. Presidents are beginning to control the federal bureaucracy for their own political agendas in a manner that has not occurred previously. Krent ‘demonstrates how President George W. Bush has been able to circumvent congressional efforts to delegate decision making to office holders and to retain such authority for himself, while Kagan shows how President Clinton was able to use directives and other measures to more effectively control and claim ownership of agency action. The Clinton and Bush Presidencies will likely serve as lessons to future administrations, suggesting that increased control of the federal bureaucracy is yet another way that presidential power will continue to expand.’

<sup>89</sup> For studies on George W. Bush’s expansion of executive authority, see: Jack Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgement Inside the Bush Administration* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), p. 14; Jane Mayer, ‘The Hidden Power: The Legal Mind Behind the White House’s War on Terror,’ *The New Yorker* (June 25, 2006) - <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/07/03/the-hidden-power>; John Yoo, *Crisis and Command: A History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New Jersey: Kaplan Trade, 2011).

unitary executive theory to guide policymaking, the use of signing statements as a form of influencing the legislative process, and the use of executive orders as a way of maintaining presidential prerogative – was truly institutionalized under Reagan, yet consolidated by his successors – particularly Clinton.<sup>90</sup>

Under Reagan, according to Kagan, America entered an era of ‘presidential administration’ in which the executive asserted comparative primacy in directing and influencing the outcome of the administrative process and she ‘identifies the Reagan presidency as the clear turning point toward this trend.’<sup>91</sup> Presidents George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and later George W. Bush, built on the legacy Reagan had left them to devise new and efficacious ways of setting the policy direction of agencies – ‘of converting administrative activity into an extension of their own policy and political agendas.’<sup>92</sup> In this vein, Christopher Kelley shows that ‘Clinton did more to move the executive branch agencies closer to White House control than either the Reagan or Bush presidencies... The Clinton administration accepted and perfected the Unitarian premises of the Reagan presidency.’<sup>93</sup> In sum, bookended by Reagan’s inauguration in 1981 and the end of George W. Bush’s presidency in 2009, this period captures a critical phase in which the American presidency reasserted itself and further expanded in scope and ambition; all the while being shaped consistently by the influence, both directly and indirectly, of Reagan’s domestic and foreign policy legacy.

Lastly, although every presidency confronts a distinctive national security challenge from their predecessor, during this era, the United States entered the final decade of the Cold

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<sup>90</sup> Elena Kagan, ‘Presidential Administration,’ *Harvard Law Review* 114:8 (2001), 2245-2385. - <https://harvardlawreview.org/print/no-volume/presidential-administration/>

<sup>91</sup> Vanessa Beasley, ‘The Rhetorical Presidency Meets the Unitary Executive: Implications for Presidential Rhetoric on Public Policy,’ *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13:1 (2010), 7-35 (p. 27).

<sup>92</sup> Kagan, p. 2282.

<sup>93</sup> Christopher Kelley, *Rethinking Presidential Power: The Unitary Executive Theory and the George W. Bush Presidency*. Paper prepared for the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association April 7-10, 2005, Chicago, IL p. 18-20.

War, witnessed the collapse of its rival superpower, and subsequently entered a period of unipolar preponderance throughout the 1990s.<sup>96</sup> However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which killed thousands on American soil, undermined the nation's sense of security, leading it to declare a War on Terror.<sup>97</sup> Such shifts and shocks to the structure of the international system, caused by the collapse of a great power, and to a great power's sense of security are rarely experienced in world history; especially, in the case of the latter, caused by a group with such comparatively lower resources and offensive capabilities.<sup>98</sup> To confront the challenges facing them during their time in office, each administration employed both offensive and defensive strategic initiatives, engaged in policy practices justified on the bases of advancing both American and global security interests, and undertook such practices unilaterally or multilaterally as those interests dictated according to the discretion of the respective administration.

### The Historiography of the Reagan Doctrine

In their 2022 *Understanding Presidential Doctrines*, Joseph Siracusa and Aiden Warren argued that 'presidential doctrine took a marked shift with the election of Ronald Reagan. Entering the White House in January 1981, Reagan promptly launched what some historians have labelled "The Second Cold War."'<sup>99</sup> The supposed doctrinal shift is usually attributed to the much tougher Cold War approach adopted by the administration in its rhetoric, in increasing the defense budget, and in seeking to roll-back communism. Fareed Zakaria

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<sup>96</sup> Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and World Politics: A Theory and Its Implications* (London: Routledge, 2010); G. John Ikenberry, 'Liberalism and Empire: Logics of Order in the American Unipolar Age,' *Review of International Studies* 30:4 (2014), 609-630; Charles Krauthammer. 'The Unipolar Moment.' *Foreign Affairs* (January 1, 1990) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1990-01-01/unipolar-moment>

<sup>97</sup> Michael Cox, 'Paradigm Shifts and 9/11: International Relations After the Twin Towers,' *Security Dialogue* 33:2 (2002), 247-251.

<sup>98</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

<sup>99</sup> Warren & Siracusa, pp. 159-160.

asserted that Reagan assumed office on a platform which rejected the previous three administrations' basic foreign policies, condemning Jimmy Carter's supposed weak posturing and the détente of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger which persisted throughout the 1970s.<sup>100</sup>

The literature analyzing the Reagan doctrine proceeded through three distinct stages. Firstly, during the 1980s, policymakers and analysts debated the wisdom of the policy of funding anti-communist insurgents to roll back the Soviet sphere of influence in the third world and writing on this so-called doctrine was heated and polemical.<sup>101</sup> For example, in 1987 conservative critic Christopher DeMuth suggested that the Reagan doctrine was 'a natural and almost inevitable step in our quest as a nation for a response to the central challenge posed by Soviet power.'<sup>102</sup> Secondly, following Reagan's departure from the presidency, former administration officials started to publish their own memoirs to explain either their personal contributions to the decisions and policies that became known as the Reagan doctrine or praising them as the right courses of action.<sup>103</sup> In the plethora of memoirs that were published in the years following Reagan's departure, administration officials were keen to emphasize how Reagan's foreign policy was something novel from previous approaches to navigating the Cold War.<sup>104</sup> One notable example is the memoir of George

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<sup>100</sup> Fareed Zakaria, 'The Reagan Strategy of Containment,' *The Academy of Political Science* 105:3 (1990), p. 373.

<sup>101</sup> Dustin Walcher, 'Chapter 19: The Reagan Doctrine,' in Andrew L. Johns, *A Companion to Ronald Reagan* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p. 347; Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Doctrine and U.S. Foreign Policy*. (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1985).

<sup>102</sup> Christopher DeMuth et al, *The Reagan Doctrine and Beyond* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1987), p. 4 - [https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/-the-reagan-doctrine-and-beyond\\_154404808049.pdf?x91208](https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/-the-reagan-doctrine-and-beyond_154404808049.pdf?x91208)

<sup>103</sup> Walcher, p. 347; Kenneth Adelman, *Reagan at Reykjavik: Forty-Eight Hours That Ended the Cold War* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014); Edwin Meese, *With Reagan: The Inside Story* (Washington: Isi Books, 1992); Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (Simon & Schuster: London, 1989); Ronald Reagan & Douglas Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: Harper, 2007); Don Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (California: Hutchinson, 1988).

<sup>104</sup> Michael V. Paulauskas, 'Chapter 16: Reagan, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War, 1981-1985,' in Andrew L. Johns (ed), *A Companion to Ronald Reagan* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p. 279; Edwin Meese, *With Reagan: The Inside Story* (Washington: Isi Books, 1992); Don Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (California: Hutchinson, 1988); Richard Wirthlin & Wynton C. Hall. *The Greatest Communicator: What Ronald Reagan Taught Me About Politics, Leadership, and Life*. (John Wiley & Sons: New York, 2005).

Shultz, Reagan's Secretary of State. This memoir heavily emphasized the author's determination to aggrandize his role in guiding the administration's foreign policy in favour of the doctrine's purported objective of funding insurgents to spread freedom and rollback communism.<sup>105</sup>

During an interview for this study, Kenneth Adelman, Reagan's Director of Arms Control from 1983 to 1987, stated that Reagan provided 'a general thrust of what his foreign policy was. It was very easy for us to work.'<sup>106</sup> Adelman then later stated to the author that, 'It doesn't seem like Reagan was a strategic thinker.'<sup>107</sup> Though such testimony indicates that Reagan came into office with instinctive ideas rather than strategic plans, National Security Adviser Bud McFarlane once said that policy emerged on a case-by-case basis and not through the application of such a comprehensive plan.<sup>108</sup> These responses constitute a microcosm of the disagreements not solely held between Reagan's staff at the time, but within the literature on his foreign policy leadership.

Thomas Robb and James Cooper noted that historians have engaged in a spirited debate regarding the factors that brought the Cold War to an end and much of this literature has focused on the role played by Reagan which is also divided 'on whether the president actually created and pursued a grand strategy.'<sup>109</sup> Robb and Cooper argued that Reagan's grand strategy was as much a product of 'internal bureaucratic politics and reflected broader internal domestic political pressures as much as it was predicated upon Reagan's reading of the international strategic situation which confronted the United States.'<sup>110</sup> This is supported

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<sup>105</sup> George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 450.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Kenneth Adelman, March 13, 2023.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Kenneth Adelman, March 13, 2023.

<sup>108</sup> Pach, p. 76.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas K. Robb & James Cooper, 'In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan's First Term, 1981-5,' *The International History Review* 45:6 (2023), 957-979.

<sup>110</sup> Robb & Cooper, p. 957.

by some Reagan officials who claimed that Reagan's leadership was the vital factor that brought about historic changes in 'Washington and in the world.'<sup>111</sup>

Other historians, such as James Graham Wilson, suggest that Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union was built on irreconcilable elements as Reagan could not seek both an international peace for a world which included the Soviet Union and eradicate communism worldwide.<sup>112</sup> Reagan's achievements, therefore, cannot be explained by a 'master plan.'<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Philip Taubman, long-serving editor at *The New York Times* whose reporting during the early Reagan years will be of greater significance later, stated to the author in an interview for this study that Reagan did not understand the degree of division within his administration and he hovered above all of this in a way that made it appear that he was oblivious to what was going on at times; thus undermining the wiseman, hands-off narrative some biographers and officials propagate.<sup>114</sup> This argument was bolstered by certain officials of Reagan's administration; most notably, in the memoir of Don Regan, the Treasury Secretary and later Chief of Staff.<sup>115</sup>

Thirdly, beginning during the 1990s, political scientists and historians started to produce detached analyses of the Reagan doctrine, and presidency, and what it signified in historical perspective; that historiography is still in development.<sup>116</sup> Primarily this is due to piqued interest in the Iran-Contra scandal and what aspects of Reagan's leadership spawned

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<sup>111</sup> Meese, p. 48.

<sup>112</sup> James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 3–5.

<sup>113</sup> Wilson, pp. 3–5.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023. This historical narrative is clearly articulated in the following works: Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan, vol. 2, The Conservative Counterrevolution, 1980–1989* (New York: Crown Forum, 2009); Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006); Francis H. Marlo, *Planning Reagan's War: Conservative Strategists and America's Cold War Victory* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012).

<sup>115</sup> Regan, *For the Record*. Regan claimed that Reagan was a passive leader and did not have full control over his subordinates.

<sup>116</sup> Peter Kornbluh & Malcolm Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

it.<sup>117</sup> In recent years, Reagan's presidency, and foreign policy, has received much scholarly attention because of the newly declassified archives documenting the policy developments and deliberations made by the administration which, combined with the opening of archives worldwide, has provided a global perspective on the political history of the United States.<sup>118</sup> Another feature of this stage is the debate between those that disagree over the extent to which Reagan's Cold war policies facilitated the collapse of the Soviet Union, and thus the end of the Cold War.<sup>119</sup> Reagan has been credited in certain hagiographies as having brought the Cold War to a sooner conclusion through his steadfast support of anti-communist freedom fighters and his increase in defense spending which – this argument goes – strained the Soviet economy in their attempts to match Reagan's spending and hold on to its global empire.<sup>120</sup>

This thesis does not seek to determine whether the underlying policy which the Reagan doctrine often codified did, or did not, contribute to the end of the Cold War.<sup>121</sup> Rather, it is concerned with exploring how the real-time debates over the existence of an operative Reagan doctrine throughout Reagan's presidency sustained and undermined the legitimacy of Reagan's policy choices at different moments. Though there have been recent studies focusing on Reagan's rhetoric and the broader political discourse of the 1980s, such as the rising popularity of evangelism in American media, there has been no study to date that

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<sup>117</sup> Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2017).

<sup>118</sup> Jonathan R. Hunt & Simon Miles, *The Reagan Moment: America and the World in the 1980s*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2021), p. ix; Philip Taubman, *In the Nation's Service: The Life and Times of George P. Shultz* (California: Stanford University Press, 2023).

<sup>119</sup> Kenneth Adelman, *Reagan at Reykjavik: Forty-Eight Hours That Ended the Cold War* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014); Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006); Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Grove Press, 1996); Henry R. Nau, 'Chapter 2: The "Great Expansion": The Economic Legacy of Ronald Reagan,' in Jeffrey L. Chidester & Paul Kengor, *Reagan's Legacy in a World Transformed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 24; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008).

<sup>120</sup> Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

<sup>121</sup> As will be shown later, the label 'Reagan doctrine' was not spawned in 1985 by Charles Krauthammer as is commonly thought in the scholarship. Rather, newspaper archives reveal the term was coined during the 1980 presidential election and was used ever since by agents, mainly in the press, seeking to define and discern Reagan's grand strategic priorities.

has attempted to trace and map the discursive use of the label ‘Reagan doctrine’ throughout Reagan’s presidency and how its evolving conceptualization worked for and against Reagan’s interests.<sup>122</sup> By doing so, it will explore how actors sought to define Reagan’s foreign policy in their own terms, how their doing so facilitated and undermined the legitimization of his choices, and, ultimately, situate the discursive expression of this doctrine within a broader historical context.

### The Historiography of the First Bush Doctrine

George H.W. Bush has not been popularly accredited with a Bush doctrine per se in the academic literature and/or in mainstream political discourse in the debates over his foreign policy legacy.<sup>123</sup> This is for two main reasons. Firstly, Bush once said that he did not subscribe to the ‘vision thing’ due to a preference to make policy on a case-by-case basis.<sup>124</sup> Despite the passage of time, Jeffrey Engel wrote that Bush’s fundamental diplomatic principles, and the overarching impact of his tenure in office, remains open for debate. This stems from the perception of Bush’s realism which favoured flexible considerations of American needs and power ‘above inviolable statements of principle. Bush’s own discomfort with public declarations of his guiding principles surely contributes to the lack of consensus over his foreign policy beliefs, as does the relative paucity of available documents.’<sup>125</sup> Secondly, and in this light, he was only in power for one term and, as Bill Kristol (who served as Chief of Staff to Vice President Dan Quayle) told the author in an interview for this

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<sup>122</sup> Toby Glenn Bates, *The Reagan Rhetoric: History and Memory in 1980s America* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011); Diane Winston, *Righting the American Dream: How the Media Mainstreamed Reagan’s Evangelical Vision* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023).

<sup>123</sup> Meiertons, p. 178.

<sup>124</sup> Hal Brands, ‘The Vision Thing,’ *Miller Center* (January 14, 2016) - <https://millercenter.org/issues-policy/foreign-policy/the-vision-thing>

<sup>125</sup> Jeffrey A. Engel, ‘A Better World...but Don’t Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H.W. Bush Twenty Years On,’ *Diplomatic History* 34:1 (2010), 25-46 (p. 25).

study, doctrines can take time to clearly develop and thus presidents often become associated with a specific principle(s) after the patterns of foreign policy decisions are more discernible with the passage of time.<sup>126</sup>

James Mann noted that, ‘For more than forty years American military strategy and planning had been premised upon the Soviet threat. Now that threat had disappeared, the Pentagon needed to formulate a new strategy.’<sup>127</sup> The most infamous of these strategies was the 1992 ‘Defense Planning Guidance, FY 1994-1999.’<sup>128</sup> This document was co-authored by Paul Wolfowitz and Scooter Libby – two lower officials in the first Bush administration who would come to wield significant influence in the second Bush administration – and was leaked to the press.<sup>129</sup> The document stated that, ‘U.S. leadership, essential for the successful resolution of the Cold War, remains critical to achieving our long-term goals in this new era.’<sup>130</sup> Though such discussions and documents are clear examples of the administration attempting to forge doctrine(s) for foreign policy, academic publications specifically on the topic of presidential doctrines ignore this presidency.<sup>131</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, in his *The Rhetorical Presidency of George H.W. Bush*, argued that rhetorically speaking Bush failed because he showed no appreciation of the role of rhetoric in the formulation of policy and he did not appreciate the judgemental aspects of the art.<sup>132</sup> As Quayle recalled in 2018: ‘Nothing was ever a big show with George Bush. The theatrics of politics ran against his nature and upbringing. He gave the job his best and expected people to notice, and he always did what

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>127</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 198.

<sup>128</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Planning: Guidance FY 1994-1999* (Washington D.C., April 16, 1992) - <https://www.archives.gov/files/declassification/iscap/pdf/2008-003-docs1-12.pdf>

<sup>129</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, ‘U.S. Strategy Plan Calls For Insuring No Rivals Develop,’ *The New York Times* (March 8, 1992) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html>

<sup>130</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Planning: Guidance FY 1994-1999*, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. 158; Meiertons, p. 178.

<sup>132</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, *The Rhetorical Presidency of George H.W. Bush* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006).

he thought right.’<sup>133</sup> In Heiko Meiertons’ 2011 *The Doctrines of US Security Policy*, which interrogated numerous presidential doctrines, beginning with the Monroe doctrine, omitted an interrogation of Bush since the author argued that no U.S. official labelled a concept, or statement, as the ‘Bush doctrine.’<sup>134</sup>

The chapter on the first so-called Bush doctrine, however, will show this statement to be historically incorrect. Further, the chapter will show that the phraseology of the ‘Bush doctrine’ was widely used by pundits and journalists in the critique of Bush’s leadership, its potential espousal was discussed internally by the administration, and the label was highly politicized during this presidency within political discourse. Joshua Kertzer observed that scholars of American foreign policy ‘take comfort in unifying foreign policy doctrines.’<sup>135</sup> The purpose of studying the contemporary rhetorizing about the first so-called Bush doctrine, within its historical context, is not to discern certain patterns in Bush’s policy decisions and statements and, in turn, retroactively superimpose the label and a new definition of what his ‘doctrine’ supposedly was. Rather, it is to identify, map, and trace when and within what contexts agents in politics and media identified a Bush doctrine during this presidency and defined it in ways which served or undermined his interests to legitimize certain courses of action.

### The Historiography of the Clinton Doctrine

In 2002, John Dumbrell asked: ‘was there a Clinton Doctrine?’<sup>136</sup> In the immediate years following Clinton’s departure from the presidency, there were many disagreements within the

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<sup>133</sup> Dan Quayle, ‘George Bush: ‘Be Prepared and Be Loyal’ *Wall Street Journal Opinion* (December 1, 2018) - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/george-bush-be-prepared-and-be-loyal-1543674594>

<sup>134</sup> Meiertons, p. 178.

<sup>135</sup> Joshua Kertzer, ‘Seriousness, Grand Strategy, and Paradigm Shifts in the “War on Terror,”’ *International Journal* 62:4 (2007), 961-979 (p. 961).

<sup>136</sup> Dumbrell, p. 43.

scholarship on Clinton's foreign policy about the extent to which there was continuity with previous Cold War strategies, the coherence of policy decisions, and over the supposed existence of a grand strategy which puzzled scholars in their attempt to impose a definitional interpretation over the Clinton era.<sup>137</sup> Henry Kissinger referred to Clinton's foreign policy as a series of seemingly unrelated decisions in response to specific crises.<sup>138</sup> James Boys argued that the reason a Clinton doctrine is not easily discernible is because 'President Clinton did not deliver the speech that introduced its key concepts.'<sup>139</sup> However, as time has passed to allow for more objective analyses, there has been a recognition that there was more coherence to Clinton's foreign policy than some have credited.

The literature analyzing Clinton's foreign policy has also developed through stages. The first stage occurred during Clinton's time in office when journalists and politicians contemporarily debated many aspects of Clinton's leadership in foreign policy; such as the way he interpreted the use of war powers, embarking on multilateral missions, and establishing a clear direction for the nation in the post-Cold War milieu.<sup>140</sup> These debates were politicized and defined by a degree of confusion regarding what Clinton's vision was for the United States in the world. The second stage was defined by more detached analyses of the Clinton era. This body of literature, however, must be seen in relation to the foreign policy being undertaken by the George W. Bush administration. Reconsiderations of Clinton's foreign policy, during the early 2000s, began to be contrasted with the policies

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<sup>137</sup> Andrew Bacevich, 'The Use of Force in the Clinton Era: Continuity or Discontinuity?' *Chicago Journal of International Law* 1:2 (2000), 375-379; James D. Boys, 'A Lost Opportunity: The Flawed Implementation of Assertive Multilateralism (1991-1993),' *European Journal of American Studies* 7:1 (2012), 1-16; Patrick Clawson, 'The Clinton Doctrine,' *Washington Institute* (December 28, 1997) - <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/clinton-doctrine>; John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes, 1992-2000* (London: Routledge, 2009); Richard Haas, 'Fatal Distraction: Bill Clinton's Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Policy* 108:1 (1997), 112-123.

<sup>138</sup> Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy*, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Boys, *Clinton's Grand Strategy*, p. 267.

<sup>140</sup> David G. Adler, "'The Law': The Clinton Theory of the War Power,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30:1 (2000), 155-168; Terry Deibel, *Clinton and Congress: The Politics of Foreign Policy* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 2000); Ryan Hendrickson. *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers*. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002).

being undertaken by Bush, to understand the legacies which the latter had to build upon vis a vis the War on Terror.<sup>141</sup> During this time, memoirs written by former Clinton administration officials were being published and, like most memoirs, served as apologies for Clinton and certain decisions which were made that were, then, being scrutinized in light of the War on Terror.<sup>142</sup> One significant theme of these memoirs is that none explicitly mentioned a ‘Clinton doctrine’ by name. The omission of this is perhaps indicative of the fact that the Clinton administration consistently dissociated and rejected the doctrinal concept for foreign policy from a rhetorical and strategic perspective. Consequently, as the chapter will show, the promulgation of the label, and how it was largely definitionally weaponized, was mainly undertaken by critics of Clinton’s foreign policy leadership in politics and media.

The third stage saw more objective analyses of Clinton’s foreign policy leadership and rhetoric.<sup>143</sup> In recent years, there has been an increased scholarly interest in the Clinton presidency with academics attempting to understand the legacy of the 1990s in the aftermath of War on Terror, the global financial crash of 2008, and the increasing tensions between the United States, Russia, and China.<sup>144</sup> These works have situated Clinton’s foreign policy in

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<sup>141</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001); Ryan Hendrickson. ‘Clinton, Bush, Congress and War Powers: A Comparative Analysis of the Military strikes on Iraq and Bin Laden.’ *Wilson Center* (2008), 1-28; Jihwan Hwang, ‘Realism and U.S. Foreign Policy Toward North Korea: The Clinton and Bush Administrations in Comparative Perspective,’ *World Affairs* 167:1 (2004), 15-29.

<sup>142</sup> Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Macmillan, 2003); Sideny Blumenthal, *The Clinton Wars* (New York: Blume, 2004); Warren Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2001); Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 2004); Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2010).

<sup>143</sup> Jason Allen Edwards, ‘Foreign Policy Rhetoric in the 1992 Presidential Campaign: Bill Clinton’s Exceptionalist Jeremiad.’ *Communication Studies Faculty Publications* (2015), 32-53; Jason Allen Edwards, *Navigating the Post-Cold War World: President Clinton’s Foreign Policy Rhetoric* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008); Jason Allen Edwards. ‘Sanctioning Foreign Policy: The Rhetorical Use of President Harry Truman.’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39:3 (2009), 454-472. Also see, Kathryn Olson, ‘Democratic Enlargement’s Value Hierarchy and Rhetorical Forms: An Analysis of Clinton’s Use of a Post-Cold War Symbolic Frame to Justify Military Interventions,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34:2 (2004), 307-324. Clinton, according to Olson, named chaos as the global enemy to an ideal order centered on expanding market democracy.

<sup>144</sup> George A. MacLean, *Clinton’s Foreign Policy in Russia: From Deterrence and Isolation to Democratization and Engagement* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Stanley Renshon (ed), *The Clinton Presidency: Campaigning, Governing, and the Psychology of Leadership* (London: Westview Press, 2020); Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism and the Origins of the War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2021).

historical perspective and have been better able to provide a clearer interpretation of Clinton's legacy.<sup>145</sup> Although there are debates which still continue to the present, such as what impact Clinton's advocacy for NATO enlargement has had on current international affairs, the passage of time has allowed scholars to determine just how crucial a decade Clinton's 1990s was for international political history and American global power.<sup>146</sup> Clinton's foreign policy has been seen to have had more coherence than previously thought due to its commitment to enlarge the world's democracies, acting to prevent humanitarian abuses, and advancing American-led multilateralism as the three main constant themes witnessable in the administration's decisions and statements.<sup>147</sup>

During the 1990s, that which agents would often define as a Clinton doctrine, as with any other doctrine, was never fixed, but characteristically evolved to suit the politics of the critique within which it was conferred. The chapter focusing on the rhetorical utilization of Clinton doctrine will contribute a novel perspective to the historiography by not attempting to impose an academic definition of that doctrine, but by interrogating the historical record for how agents during that presidency conferred and defined it in their attempts to shape certain understandings regarding Clinton's leadership over foreign policy. And, furthermore, how their doing so served to undermine or sustain the legitimacy of Clinton's decisions. Situating the study of the discourse surrounding the Clinton doctrine in this historical perspective permits for a deeper exploration into the contrasts and continuities in how doctrines are weaponized in political rhetoric, how different administrations think about associating and/or disassociating with doctrines, and how a multitude of actors inside the American polity, but

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<sup>145</sup> Nigel Hamilton, *Bill Clinton: Mastering the Presidency* (London: Blackstone, 2007); Patrick J. Maney, *Bill Clinton: New Gilded Age President* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2016); Rosanna Perotti (ed.), *Presidency in the United States: Foreign Policy in the Clinton Administration* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019); Rosanna Perotti (ed.), *The Clinton Presidency and the Constitutional System*. (Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 2012).

<sup>146</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018); Rajan Menon & William Ruger, 'NATO Enlargement and US Grand Strategy: A New Assessment,' *International Politics* 57:1 (2020), 371-400.

<sup>147</sup> Boys, p. 266.

outside of administrations, play important roles in the articulation of American grand strategy over time.

### The Historiography of the Bush Doctrine

George W. Bush came to the presidency in January 2001. Eight months later, the attacks of September 11 occurred which led to the deaths of approximately 3000 people. Bush interpreted this act, personally, as a declaration of war.<sup>148</sup> In response, America launched a global War on Terror as part of which the administration authorized an invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. The new foreign policy framework and practices, which were most clearly outlined in the administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy*, has come to be known as the Bush doctrine.<sup>149</sup> As Warren and Siracusa argued, 'The formal articulation of the Bush Doctrine, under the administration of George W. Bush, was encompassed in the 2002 release of the National Security Strategy.'<sup>150</sup> The four key themes of this document were its calls for American pre-emptive military action against hostile states and terrorist groups which sought to develop weapons of mass destruction; secondly, its announcement that America would not allow its global military strength to be challenged; thirdly, its commitment that America would cooperatively engage in international multilateralism but would not hesitate to act alone if necessary; fourthly, it proclaimed the goal of spreading democracy around the world and especially in the Muslim world.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 30.

<sup>149</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington D.C., September 2002) - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>

<sup>150</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. 165.

<sup>151</sup> Keir A. Lieber & Robert J. Lieber, 'The Bush National Security Strategy,' *Commentary* 7:4 (December 2002), p. 32 - [https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa\\_dec02\\_lieber.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa_dec02_lieber.pdf)

A significant contribution to the Bush doctrine's historiographical development was the publications of memoirs during, and post-presidency.<sup>152</sup> Bush, in his memoir, elaborated upon this when he wrote that after 9/11, he developed a strategy to protect the country 'that came to be known as the Bush Doctrine.'<sup>153</sup> This strategy was based on four principles. First, make no distinction between the terrorists and the nations that harbour them – and hold both to account. Second, take the fight to the enemy overseas before they can attack American soil. Third, confront threats before they fully materialized. Fourth, 'advance liberty and hope as an alternative to the enemy's ideology of repression and fear. The freedom agenda, as I called the fourth prong, was both idealistic and realistic.'<sup>154</sup> The chapter on the second Bush doctrine will show that these strategies and policies became known as such due to the rhetoric of the Bush administration itself; particularly of the president and Vice President Dick Cheney. Within these memoirs, former administration officials paid uneven attention to the so-called doctrine with some specifically mentioning the doctrine in passing, and others – including the president and vice president – paying much more attention to it.

Much research was also done on the Bush doctrine during the Bush presidency itself. In 2002, Walter LaFaber suggested the Bush doctrine was constructed to pre-empt domestic debate.<sup>155</sup> In this light, if a president can convince Congress and the American people that his 'doctrine is "true" and "a dogma" – as, for example, Harry Truman did with his doctrine in 1947 – then, as Truman's secretary of state Dean Acheson said in a slightly different context, the administration's policy is off to the races.'<sup>156</sup> Early analyses, thus, focused on the post-

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<sup>152</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (Texas: Virgin Books, 2011); Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012); David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003); Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2011); Karl Rove, *Courage and Consequence: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010); Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

<sup>153</sup> Bush, p. 396.

<sup>154</sup> Bush, p. 396.

<sup>155</sup> Walter LaFaber, 'The Bush Doctrine,' *Diplomatic History* 26:4 (2002), 543-558 (p. 549).

<sup>156</sup> LaFaber, p. 549.

9/11 security policies being enacted. The Bush doctrine was contemporarily seen in politicized terms.<sup>157</sup> Robert Kaufman's *In the Defense of the Bush Doctrine* argued that the doctrine was inspired by democratic realism which rested on two main pillars (both of which reflect frameworks and policies to be repudiated): the inadequacy of deterrent and containment strategies when dealing with terrorists and so-called rogue states and the culture of tyranny in the Middle East which had a tendency to spawn terrorism and rogue states, whether religious or secular.<sup>158</sup>

In the years since Bush departed office, there has been much scholarship on certain elements of the Bush doctrine's discourse, which has usually been undertaken by theories within the field of international relations and the social sciences, such as social constructivism and critical discourse analysis.<sup>159</sup> The Bush doctrine, John Mearsheimer claimed, was a 'radical strategy that has no parallel in American history.'<sup>160</sup> However, certain participants of this study who worked in the Bush administration, as will be shown, disagree with this statement. For example, corresponding to the author for this study, Paul Stephan, who served as a counsellor on international law in the Bush administration from 2006 to 2007, observed that,

I have difficulty distinguishing the so-called Bush Doctrine from general U.S. policy.

The United States, to my knowledge, always has regarded a pre-emptive approach to

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<sup>157</sup> Bush, p. 137. Bush, in his memoir, said that, 'This new doctrine overturned the approach of the past, which treated terrorist groups as distinct from their sponsors.'; Dawn E. Johnsen, 'What's a President To Do? Interpreting the Constitution in the Wake of Bush Administration Abuses,' *Boston University Law Review* 88 (2008), 395-419; Melvyn Leffler, 'Bush's Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Policy* 144:1 (2004), 22-28; Stanley Renshon & Peter Suedfeld, *Understanding the Bush Doctrine: Psychology and Strategy in the Age of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>158</sup> Robert G. Kaufman, *In the Defence of the Bush Doctrine* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

<sup>159</sup> Patricia L. Dunmire, '9/11 Changed Everything: An Intertextual Analysis of the Bush Doctrine,' *Discourse and Society* 20:2 (2009); Mark Rigstad, 'The "Bush Doctrine" as Hegemonic Discourse Strategy,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 12:1 (2009), 377-398; Sjöstedt, pp. 233-254.

<sup>160</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018), p. 187.

threats to national security as valid. The Domino Theory was about pre-empting a perceived threat, after all.<sup>161</sup>

In her study of the origins of the Truman and Bush doctrines, Roxanna Sjöstedt employed a constructivist approach to analyze the ‘prevalent political and societal discourses, identifying which discursive mechanisms are prominent in both discourse and doctrine.’<sup>162</sup> Sjöstedt argued that the discursive mechanisms of the securitization process, settled norms, and identity constructions ‘facilitates the explanation of both the origins of a doctrine and its contents.’<sup>163</sup> Though Sjöstedt’s study has contributed to the development of a more comprehensive, and theoretical, understanding about how certain mechanisms of discourse informs how doctrines originate from a constructivist perspective, such studies on the discourse around presidential doctrines are mainly confined to those in the social sciences.

A specific focus on rhetorical appeals to the notion of ‘doctrine’ itself within the discourse has not been well-studied in the broader subject of presidential doctrines and/or the historiography on the Bush doctrine. In turn, the chapter on the Bush doctrine will show how the use of the term ‘doctrine’ took on new life due to the frequency with which top administration officials, particularly the president and Vice President Dick Cheney, officially endorsed it in their rhetoric; something which this study found most administrations have not done. Therefore, the chapter will explore how their doing so worked for and against the administration’s efforts to legitimize their foreign policy choices; particularly in the case of the Iraq invasion.

## **Core Argument**

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<sup>161</sup> Written response from Paul Stephan, February 27, 2023. The Domino theory from the Cold War posited that if one country in a certain region fell to communism, then its environs would likely fall.

<sup>162</sup> Sjöstedt, p. 234.

<sup>163</sup> Sjöstedt, p. 233.

As the literature has established, presidential doctrines have generally been enunciated in a variety of forms and constitute a publicly articulated presidential statement(s) outlining either the guiding principles, strategic vision, and/or policy goals of the administration. Brands has recognized that, in the study of doctrines, questions arise relating to what qualifies one, and what their meaning is, since they are not formal documents and they lack the force of law.<sup>164</sup> Though Colucci has suggested that presidential doctrines are ‘unilateral leadership-driven statements’ and in their cultural moment and stretching to the present, ‘these doctrines have legitimized the foreign policy of the United States,’ how they do so remains unclear.<sup>165</sup> As does how they can undermine that legitimization effort.

Few issues have loomed larger in political life ‘in both the theory and practice of governance, than those phrased in terms of “legitimacy.”’<sup>166</sup> The concept of legitimacy has received much scholarly attention in the recent two decades over issues such as the invasion of Iraq and the role of the United Nations in preventing atrocities.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, legitimacy is broadly defined as a value ‘whereby something or someone is recognized and accepted as right and proper’ and as being motivated by the search for the public good.<sup>168</sup> Dwight Anderson observed that scholars take presidential legitimacy for granted by assuming that

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<sup>164</sup> Brands, pp. 1-2.

<sup>165</sup> Colucci, p. 137.

<sup>166</sup> Shane P. Mulligan, ‘The Uses of Legitimacy in International Relations,’ *Millennium* 34:2 (2006), 349-375 (p. 349).

<sup>167</sup> Thomas Franck, *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Jean-Marc Coicaud & Veijo Heiskanen, *The Legitimacy of International Organizations* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001); Jens Steffek, ‘The Legitimation of International Governance: A Discourse Approach’, *European Journal of International Relations* 9:2 (2003), 287–313; Daniel Bodansky, ‘The Legitimacy of International Governance: A Coming Challenge for International Environmental Law?’, *American Journal of International Law* 93:2 (1999): 596–624; Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>168</sup> Jing Chen, *Useful Complaints: How Petitions Assist Decentralized Authoritarianism in China* (New York: Lexington Book, 2016), p. 165; Ruth Amossy, ‘Constructing Political Legitimacy and Authority in Discourse,’ *Argumentation et Analyse du Discours* 28:1 (2022), p. 2. Legitimate is a synonym of fair, valid, and reasonable. Legitimation ‘refers to the process by which the necessarily imperfect legitimacy of leaders attempts to express itself and to be recognized. It is a discursive dynamic...the aim of legitimization discourse is to have the ruler’s policy recognized as obeying the established rules.’

presidents are ‘self-legitimizing’ because presidential power is derived from the Constitution.<sup>169</sup> However, establishing legitimacy is not purely transactional, such as service provision, but rests on perceptions and expectations of the state.<sup>170</sup> The vagueness with which presidential doctrines are often defined, either by the administration or by a third party actor, can serve to shape expectations about what is appropriate for America to do in certain circumstances. It does so by providing a conceptual framework that allows for the subjective interpretation of presidential choices in a manner that can align, or misalign, with the evolving public and political sentiments; with good and bad consequences for the administration’s official rationalization of the choice it made.

Thereby, legitimation refers to the process by which people accredit or license a type of state behaviour and is ‘a justification of a behaviour [...] The process of legitimization is enacted by argumentation, that is, by providing arguments that explain social actions, ideas, thoughts, and declarations.’<sup>171</sup> Delegitimization is also enacted by argumentation, but in ways which second-guess and discredit an action or a behaviour’s justification. Karin Bäckstrand and Fredrik Söderbaum posit that ‘legitimation and de-legitimation often shape each other and therefore need to be integrated within a single framework.’<sup>172</sup> Legitimacy claims are rarely uncontested and institutions ‘face oppositions and are confronted with attempts geared towards their de-legitimation.’<sup>173</sup> In turn, determining whether an administration is acting legitimately is influenced by broader perceptions about what principles are guiding it, how policy is formulated, and how the president communicates the direction they seek to take

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<sup>169</sup> Dwight G. Anderson, ‘Power, Rhetoric, and the State: A Theory of Presidential Legitimacy,’ *The Review of Politics* 50:2 (1988), 198-214 (p. 198).

<sup>170</sup> Florian Weigand, *Waiting for Dignity: Legitimacy and Authority in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023).

<sup>171</sup> Antonio Reyes, ‘Strategies of Legitimization in Political Discourse: From Words to Actions,’ *Discourse & Society* 22:6 (2011), 781-807.

<sup>172</sup> Karin Bäckstrand & Fredrik Söderbaum, ‘Chapter 6: Legitimation and Delegitimation in Global Governance: Discursive, Institutional, and Behavioural Practices,’ in Jonas Tallberg (ed.) et al, *Legitimacy in Global Governance: Sources, Processes, and Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 102.

<sup>173</sup> Bäckstrand & Söderbaum, p. 102.

American foreign policy on given issues. The concept of the presidential doctrine becomes rhetorically charged in the context of rationalizing and scrutinizing an administration's foreign policy choices.

### Presidential Doctrines and Sustaining the Legitimation of Policy Choices

Those considered successful leaders in the history of American foreign policy were able, through their own effort and that of others, to 'control the political definition of their actions' and, thereby, the terms in which their places in history were understood.<sup>174</sup> Sustaining the legitimacy of policy choices necessitates not only that the president's policy is recognized as being motivated by the search for the public good, such as the nation's security and defense, but also that the president – and their supporters in politics and media – successfully repudiates approaches to foreign policy that, to some degree, are being argued to have compromised national security or were no longer conducive to current circumstances in America's diplomatic relations.<sup>175</sup> Without the authority to repudiate, 'a president will have difficulty keeping the political impact of the exercise of power aligned with his own definition of the moment at hand; with it, he can undergird in a coherent public discourse the most expansive and extensive disruptions.'<sup>176</sup> Throughout American history, slogans have been generated to label presidential leadership projects in foreign policy such as Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbour, Dwight Eisenhower's New Look, and Donald Trump's America First to name but a few. Such a list 'suggests something of the importance presidents

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<sup>174</sup> Skowronek, p. 17 & 27; Skowronek, *Political Time*, p. 11.

<sup>175</sup> 'Federalist No. 72. The Same Subject Continued, and Re-eligibility of the Executive Considered,' *The New York Packet* (Friday, March 21, 1788), accessed from the Library of Congress - <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-71-80#s-lg-box-wrapper-25493464>. Alexander Hamilton, writing in the *Federalist Papers*, said that undoing what has been done by a predecessor 'is very often considered by a successor as the very best proof he can give of his own capacity.'

<sup>176</sup> Skowronek, p. 27.

attach to controlling the political definition of their actions in the moment at hand.’<sup>177</sup> They also codify a particular president’s departure from modes of diplomacy and engagement that these presidents sought to repudiate in their attempts to reconfigure American foreign policy regarding particular issues in America’s international relations.<sup>178</sup> What is less understood is how people in the polity, whether in politics or in the media, use presidential doctrines to not solely communicate and rationalize policy choices according to a broader understanding of the world but to facilitate the legitimization of those choices through framing them in repudiatory terms.

Billau argued that it is important for each president to assert distance from his predecessors and doctrines are a tool for doing this ‘because they tell the world the course that will be set by the leaders who articulate them. Second, presidential doctrine clarifies where the president places value. Doctrines are important strategically because they help communicate intent.’<sup>179</sup> Reporting on the George W. Bush administration’s rhetorical invocation of the term ‘doctrine’ in its speeches after 9/11, Karen DeYoung of *The Washington Post* wrote that, ‘The use of the word “doctrine” is intentional. It is meant to describe a new paradigm in U.S. foreign policy, a guiding principle through which other issues will be viewed and acted upon throughout the Bush presidency.’<sup>180</sup> What DeYoung noticed, here, was that the Bush administration’s specific invocation of the term ‘doctrine’ in

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<sup>177</sup> Skowronek, p. 25. Authority, Skowronek argued, ‘reaches to the expectations that surround the exercise of power at a particular moment, to perceptions of what is appropriate for a given president to do. A president’s authority hinges on the warrants that can be drawn from the moment at hand to justify action and secure the legitimacy of the changes effected.’; Yoo, p. 54. Article II of the Constitution vested executive power in a single president, but – Yoo argued – it ‘did not list its components (unlike Article I’s enumeration of legislative powers). It did not create any advisors, heads of departments, or a cabinet, not to mention a White House.’

<sup>178</sup> ‘Donald Trump Delivers Speech on Foreign Policy Plans,’ *PBS NewsHour* (April 27, 2016) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePlopVAV6Hc>. At 0:14, Trump declared: ‘I would like to talk today about how to develop a new foreign policy direction for our country. One that replaces randomness with purpose. Ideology with strategy. And chaos with peace...It’s time to invite new voices and new visions into the fold.’

<sup>179</sup> Daneta G. Billau, PhD Thesis: ‘Clinton’s Foreign Policy and the Politics of Intervention: Cases of Ethnic Cleansing and Democratic Governance.’ *Old Dominion University* (2002) – [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis\\_etds/29/](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds/29/), p. 1.

<sup>180</sup> Karen DeYoung. ‘Allies Are Cautious On “Bush Doctrine.”’ *The Washington Post* (October 15, 2001) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/10/16/allies-are-cautious-on-bush-doctrine/9719022e-d6c4-4942-b9d0-735ba80a42f9/>.

its rhetoric constituted a core component of its attempt to forge a rationalizing narrative about its response to the 9/11 attacks. And, by implication, repudiate previous frameworks that treated terrorism as a law enforcement issue, which dealt with potential threats abroad through deterrence and containment, and/or which distinguished between terrorists and their sponsors.<sup>181</sup> For the second Bush administration, offensive measures, combined with the use of military force, would be required to tackle the global terrorist threat.<sup>182</sup> The doctrinal concept thus rationalized what the administration perceived to have been the available and unavailable options for dealing with the threats.

Writing ten years prior to DeYoung, Michael Krepon in the *Los Angeles Times*, noted how George H.W. Bush's management of American nuclear policy at the end of the Cold War signalled a departure from overreliance on nuclear weapons.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, Krepon wrote that, 'The emerging Bush Doctrine is much clearer about what no longer has meaning than about where this country is headed.' 'A Central tenet of the Bush Doctrine,' Krepon observed, 'which for reasons of modesty or embarrassment will probably be left unsaid, is that U.S. officials vastly overstated the value of nuclear weapons.'<sup>184</sup> Krepon reported that Bush's initiatives lacked an overarching theme and led firmly away from doctrines and truisms of the past, but 'unlike other presidential doctrines, Bush's is defined by discarded items, not by stirring goals.'<sup>185</sup> This piece came just weeks after Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, on September 28, 1991, signed an Execute Order to end the practice of having U.S. strategic bombers on alert and ready to launch in a few minutes loaded with weapons and

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<sup>181</sup> Jason G. Ralph, *America's War on Terror: The State of the 9/11 Exception from Bush to Obama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>182</sup> Kaufman, p. 3.

<sup>183</sup> Michael Krepon, 'Bush States His Doctrine by Omission,' *Los Angeles Times* (October 6, 1991) - <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-10-06-op-5-story.html>

<sup>184</sup> Krepon, 'Bush States His Doctrine by Omission.'

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

fully fuelled; which they had continuously been since 1957.<sup>186</sup> Bush's Presidential Nuclear Initiatives announcement also instituted deeper reductions in a wide range of nuclear weapons systems than had ever been done before which reflected and accelerated the changed relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>187</sup> In sum, though there has been a scholarly recognition that presidential doctrines, however a scholar has conceptualized their articulation, have been used to defend new policies and/or actions underway, this has neglected the importance of the theme of repudiation which – this thesis will reveal – is central to how doctrines are characterized to facilitate the legitimization of policy choices.

### Presidential Doctrines and Undermining the Legitimation of Policy Choices

Since presidents must sustain their narratives, confirming during the exercise of their powers their own presentments about their place in history, which itself necessitates they pre-empt the 'authority of others to challenge what is being done,' if what is being done and why is being questioned and second-guessed in the national debate, the president's credibility will be undermined.<sup>188</sup> The opinion leaders, as Richard Nixon once called those in the press, are quarrelsome for presidents as they criticize decisions that presidents make in such a way that makes it appear presidents are solely responsible when something goes wrong.<sup>189</sup> In these criticisms, labels and phrases are often propagated in the press to impose a certain interpretation of the president's leadership. For example, Nixon was labelled 'Tricky Dick,' and Bill Clinton as 'Slick Willie' which were labels exploited by their political opponents as

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<sup>186</sup> Susan Koch, 'The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992,' *Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction National Defense University* (September 2012), p. 1. -

[https://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/documents/casestudies/cswmd\\_casestudy-5.pdf](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/documents/casestudies/cswmd_casestudy-5.pdf)

<sup>187</sup> Koch, p. 4.

<sup>188</sup> Skowronek, p. 24.

<sup>189</sup> The New York Times, 'Criticizing the President,' (October 18, 1972) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/10/18/archives/criticizing-the-president.html>

caricatures to attack these presidents' political identity.<sup>190</sup> These labels, another example of which was 'King George' for George W. Bush, are self-evident in how they reflect a political personality type characterized by questionable approaches to leadership. The labels of presidential doctrines (e.g., 'Clinton doctrine' etc.), however, are less understood in terms of how they have been generated, defined, and characterized in ways which undermined the legitimacy of a president's decisions.

The historical record shows the main ways in which opponents of the president's foreign policy discursively use doctrines to undermine a president's choices is by identifying inconsistencies and strategically fallacious assumptions in decisions made, such as why military force was used in one instance to prevent ethnic cleansing and not in another similar instance. Or, to dismiss an administration's argument that using military force to spread democracy in one country would lead to the flourishing of other democracies in that country's environs. And, subsequently, attaching their understandings about decisions to a doctrine the president may or may not have endorsed as such. In this light, codifying statements and policies into a doctrine can serve as a straw man for opponents to successfully define the president's policy choices in terms which undermines, and oversimplifies, their narrative justifying their policy choices. In this light, Philip Zelikow, who served in the State Departments of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and co-authored the George W. Bush administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy*, wrote to the author that,

“Doctrines” are retrospective rationalizations of catalytic episodes that have already happened. To explain what we’re already doing, popularizers and pundits (and their academic counterparts) look backward and simplify what has already happened into

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<sup>190</sup> Kevin Merida, ‘It’s Come To This: A Nickname That’s Proven Hard to Slip,’ *Washington Post* (December 20, 1998), p. F01. - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/stories/slick122098.htm>

axioms. Both groups, the popularizers, and the pundits, need such inventions, the latter in order to provide straw men.<sup>192</sup>

The strawman fallacy, into which Zelikow suggests doctrines can be constructed, is an important historical lens through which to analyze how presidential doctrines have operated in the discourse of American foreign affairs. A strawman argument takes place ‘when an opponent’s argument or position is distorted or oversimplified so that it can easily be refuted.’<sup>193</sup> The simplification of explicit or implied principles purportedly present in policy practices and statements into a doctrine that an administration may not have wanted to have endorsed as such is an act that those who are critical of a set of choices will undertake to codify them in their own terms.

The former head of the Council on Foreign Relations, Leslie Gelb, wrote in 1992 that within days of Harry Truman’s speech announcing American aid to Greece and Turkey, his language was weaponized by ‘ideologues casting about for something to worship or hate and journalists eager to make government policies far clearer and more momentous than their authors intended. Over time, they elevated his address into the Truman Doctrine.’<sup>194</sup> Influential people within the American foreign policy establishment have, in turn, recognized that association with a specific doctrine can be detrimental due to their imposition of limitations to justify shifts in policy when necessity demands it. As a consequence of conferring a presidential doctrine, the president’s narrative can suffer from oversimplification since a phrase that may sum up the policy in a way that will fit on a bumper sticker rarely leaves the administration with the latitude it needs to make the policy fit the

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<sup>192</sup> Written response from Philip Zelikow, February 9, 2023.

<sup>193</sup> George Y. Bizer, ‘The Persuasiveness of the Strawman Rhetorical Technique,’ *Social Influence* 4:3 (2009), 216-230 (p. 217).

<sup>194</sup> Leslie Gelb, ‘Not the Bush Doctrine: Policy Written in Stone Limits Choices in a Messy World,’ *Detroit Free Press* (December 8, 1992), p. 9. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/99335572/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>.

situation.<sup>195</sup> Though the thesis is not concerned with arguing how presidential doctrines could be made more effective in terms of implementation, the relevance of this is that the language and rhetoric surrounding doctrines are of paramount importance in the effort to sustain the legitimacy of choices. Each president under study was, on at least one occasion, confronted with the prospect of becoming associated with a doctrine named after themselves. Their doing, or not doing so, was based upon the dynamic of their personality, the circumstances of the international system during which they were in power, and the people and ideas prominent around them.

## **Methodology**

During the course of the research, I came across multiple comments made by officials from both parties over the years calling the notion of doctrine ‘nonsense,’ grand strategy as ‘baloney,’ and that they always ‘resist doctrine.’<sup>196</sup> This made one curious to uncover why some administrations officially endorse doctrines in their rhetoric, and why others resist doing so. To uncover this, I wanted to bring the study of presidential doctrines back to basics and go to the historical record to see how actors, whether inside administrations, in Congress, and/or in media, at the time used the term ‘doctrine’ in their rhetoric across and throughout different presidencies. This approach has been informed by previous attempts to study the power of doctrinal language in the United States.

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<sup>195</sup> Billau, ‘pp. 2-3.

<sup>196</sup> Thomas Robb, *Jimmy Carter and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 32; National Public Radio, ‘Interview: Wolfowitz on U.S. Role in Other Nations’ Affairs.’; ‘A Conversation with Secretary of State Antony Blinken,’ *Council on Foreign Relations* (June 28, 2023) - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuaF\\_Gw5l5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuaF_Gw5l5w). Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke about how America needed to adjust to the new threats and changing structure of the international system which was largely being defined by rising tensions with China and said that, ‘To the extent there is a doctrine, and I always resist doctrines, it really is invest in ourselves at home and build these partnerships abroad.’

Whilst Reagan was in his final year in office, the Library of Congress sanctioned a bibliographer – within the foreign affairs and national defense division – to search for selected references, between 1979-88, for a ‘Reagan Doctrine’ to present ‘the history, origin, and definition of the Reagan Doctrine. It examines applications of that foreign policy initiative and considers reactions to the Doctrine.’<sup>197</sup> More recently, the legal scholar Alli Orr Larsen wrote a paper titled ‘Becoming a Doctrine’ asking: ‘how does a doctrine become a doctrine?’<sup>198</sup> This question was spawned by the fact that on the last day of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2021-22 term, it handed down a decision on the “‘major questions *doctrine*” and granted cert to hear a case presenting the “‘independent state legislature *doctrine*” – neither of which had been called “doctrines” there before.’<sup>199</sup> Larsen, in turn, sought to understand what ‘consequences flow from attaching the label’ because becoming ‘a doctrine is more than just semantics; it is a baptism that matters.’<sup>200</sup> This is because, Larsen wrote, although ‘I ask the deep question “what is doctrine anyway?” the point of this article is not to quibble on the boundaries of that word’s definition. Rather, the take-home point here is about the power of language and labels, particularly in an age of clever framing.’<sup>201</sup>

In the law, as in politics, words are power.<sup>202</sup> And, consequently, ‘given the power of the word “doctrine” it is imperative to trace and critically think about who is using the word

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<sup>197</sup> Library of Congress Congressional Research Service, ‘Reagan Doctrine: Selected References, 1979-1988,’ *CRS Report for Congress* by Sherry B. Shapiro. - <https://li.proquest.com/elhpdf/histcontext/CRS-1988-LSV-0085.pdf>. This was the only such bibliography ever sanctioned specifically for a presidential doctrine by the Library of Congress.

<sup>198</sup> Alli Orr Larsen, ‘Becoming a Doctrine,’ *William & Mary Law School Research Paper No. 09-467, Florida Law Review*, Vol. 76, 2023, p. 4. - [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4374736](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4374736)

<sup>199</sup> Larsen, pp. 1-3.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3; Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska, ‘Chapter: Labelling and Mislabelling in American Political Discourse: A Survey Based on Insights of Independent Media Monitors,’ in Urszula Okulska & Piotr Cap, *Perspectives in Politics and Discourse* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), pp. 5-6. Labels can take the form of nouns, adjectives, participles, compounds, phrases, clauses, and function to recategorize ‘experience and to bring some order into informational chaos,’ but ‘even then they are not to function as propositions – statements about reality – but rather as new names for fragments of reality.’

<sup>202</sup> Mark Thompson, ‘From Trump to Brexit Rhetoric: How Today’s Politicians Have Got Away with Words,’ *The Guardian* (August 27, 2016) - <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/aug/27/from-trump-to-brexit-rhetoric-how-todays-politicians-have-got-away-with-words>

and for what purposes.’<sup>203</sup> In this light, to determine how the use of this mode of language facilitated or undermined the legitimacy of policy choices, a vast array of sources was probed to identify when a doctrine was being explicitly discussed to discern the thematic messages being conveyed either during sessions of Congress, presidential speeches, or in newspaper columns. Online archival repositories drawn upon in this research have been determined by the study’s objectives and the availability of sources. These sources included: the public papers of the presidents; the Congressional Record; the readily accessible newspaper archives held by America’s prominent and national publications and the genealogy site *Ancestry* which possesses a total repository of around a billion newspaper pages;<sup>204</sup> the National Security Digital Archive; the State Department’s Office of the Historian’s *Foreign Relations of the United States*; transcripts of presidential speeches; footage publicized by the respective presidential libraries’ YouTube channels and other mediums such as C-Span; and the respective presidential libraries’ archives. Polling data was also used for insights into how at certain points throughout the respective presidencies, the polity was judging the foreign policy leadership of the president to further elucidate on the perceived legitimacy of presidential decision-making in foreign policy.

Secondly, the methodological challenge of sifting through the available data and sources is one all historians generally, and of American foreign policy, have faced in recent years. Though it is usually the case that the nearer one’s research approaches the present ‘the more this becomes a matter of painful selection and impossible workloads rather than an opportunity to know and understand more,’ the area of American foreign policy (depending on the era under study) can be said to leave the historian facing a superfluity of sources rather than a shortage; especially as it relates to the discussion of foreign policy in the public

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<sup>203</sup> Larsen, p. 4.

<sup>204</sup> David McKay, *American Politics and Society* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), p. 147; James Ford Rhodes, ‘Newspapers as Historical Sources,’ *The Atlantic* (1909) - <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1909/05/newspapers-as-historical-sources/638864/>

domain.<sup>205</sup> Contrarily, the declassification process for documents relating to presidents George H.W. Bush and Clinton, within the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series has begun just recently, and the process has not yet started for records pertaining to the George W. Bush presidency. Moreover, in the case of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, a repository for over sixty-five million pages of archival records and hundreds of hours of historical video footage, it has attempted to make their holdings more available to audiences who cannot travel to Simi Valley, California, through the digitization of records.<sup>206</sup> Not all of these documents have been digitized. Nor have they all been so within the other presidents' libraries. Nonetheless, this inaccessibility to certain sources is assuaged by two methodological approaches of this research.

Firstly, since the thesis is concerned with historical data regarding the real-time rhetorical use of presidential doctrines, the main focus has been on how they were presented publicly, such as by a journalist within an editorial or a politician during a speech, to the American polity. Consequently, sources that were either produced for public consumption, such as newspapers, or made readily available to the public, such as transcripts of sessions of Congress, were of more importance than documents detailing secretive discussions for the answering of the study's research questions. Although sources of the latter variety – held within the aforementioned archives and repositories – were utilized for insights into how administrations considered the reactions to their doctrines in the broader discourse, how they thought about the public endorsement of the doctrinal concept more broadly, and the extent to which the respective presidential doctrine influenced its decisions, the research questions are concerned with the presentation and discussion of doctrines in the public realm; particularly in the media realm. Therefore, the heavy use of sources originating from the media, such as

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<sup>205</sup> Glen O'Hara, 'New Labour in Power: Five Problems of Contemporary History,' *The Political Quarterly* 94: 2 (2023), 223-229 (p. 226).

<sup>206</sup> Jennifer Torres et al., 'The Special Relationship Revealed: US-UK Materials in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library,' *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18 (2020), 498-521.

newspapers from the eras concerned, was necessary because they not only report on foreign policy, but frame, interpret, and sometimes challenge the assumptions upon which an administration's choices were based. Often, as will be shown, this led to journalists and commentators define and frame doctrines in their own terms that aligned with their policy preferences in ways which either bolstered the administration's attempt at policy legitimization or exposed and critiqued its weaknesses, thus facilitating undermining discourses.

Nonetheless, one pitfall in drawing upon sources in the media was how administrations and politicians distort the truth and manipulate the press for their own purposes.<sup>207</sup> The media's role in shaping the debate through their construction of presidential doctrines has been an important element of this thesis. As David McKay argued, 'it is only through the media that presidents can build support, candidates win approval and incumbent politicians bolster their public image.'<sup>208</sup> The media is a crucial part of the foreign policy decision-making environment since 'political leaders take the media into consideration in its national and international aspects.'<sup>209</sup> Han Soo Lee observed that like the president, the news media produce ideologically slanted stories about policies which can affect policymakers.<sup>210</sup> Often, as will be seen, what becomes labelled as a doctrine is a journalistic judgement about the direction an administration is going on a given issue; whether nuclear policy or spreading democracy.

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<sup>207</sup> Herbert Schmertz, 'The Media and the Presidency,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16:1 (1986), 11-21; Glen R. Smith, 'Politicians and the News Media: How the Elite Attacks Influence Perceptions of Media Bias,' *International Journal of Press/Politics* 15:3 (2010), 219-244.

<sup>208</sup> McKay, p. 147.

<sup>209</sup> Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Edward S. Herman, 'The Media's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy,' *Journal of International Affairs* 47:1 (1993), p. 25. Herman argued that, 'In fact, the media do *not* root about and expose abuses freely and without discrimination – an important possibility excluded from the debates.'; Jordan Robert Roth & David H. Gray, 'Conflict Framing: The Effect of Media and Culture on Foreign Policy,' *Global Security Studies* 3:1 (2012); Chanan Naveh, 'The Role of the Media in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Theoretical Framework,' *Conflict & Communication* 1:2 (2002), 1-14 (p. 2). Also see, Piers Robinson, 'The CNN Effect: Can the News Media Drive Foreign Policy?' *Review of International Studies* 25:2 (1999), 301-309.

<sup>210</sup> Han Soo Lee, 'Analyzing the Multidirectional Relationships Between the President, News Media, and the Public: Who Affects Whom?' *Political Communication* 31:1 (2014), 259-281.

A telling truth of the current era, therefore, is that the mass media and advanced communication technologies have ‘altered the definition game considerably.’<sup>211</sup> Twenty-four/seven media thrives on controversy and pretence as it ‘dwells on every quirk of personality and inconsistency in action...In this new environment, contenders for power cannot assume anything about their political identities; prior acts and political affiliations no longer suffice in projecting a set of leadership credentials.’<sup>212</sup> In this way, Bowles and McMahon noted that presidents and the media have a symbiotic, but mutually parasitic relationship.<sup>213</sup> This is because they each attempt to influence the other to act in accordance with each other’s preferences as to what American foreign policy should look like. The attempts to define a presidential doctrine in the national debate highlight this phenomena because labelling a set of policy practices or statements as a doctrine can be useful for a newspaper headline, and useful for the administration to the extent it explanatorily simplifies its objectives, but it can also oversimplify and be defined in the beholder’s own terms since doctrines are rarely officially endorsed as such; often undermining the administration’s narrative.

Secondly, the employment of oral history methods in the form of interviews provided insights which could not be discerned from the documentary record alone and subsequently provided for a more in-depth account of the historically politicized nature of conferring and endorsing doctrines. When undertaking oral history, there are important considerations to reflect upon that the writing of this thesis has permitted. Lynn Abrams observed that, ‘Memory is the bread and butter of the oral historian. Accessing the past, or versions of the past, via an oral history interview, is a process that relies upon the workings of memory, both

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<sup>211</sup> Skowronek, p. 126.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>213</sup> Nigel Bowles & Robert K. McMahon, *Government and Politics of the United States*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 135.

in a neurological sense and in a social sense.’<sup>214</sup> In turn, oral historians have had to defend their method of inquiry against charges of the unreliability of memory which, when interviewing politicians, becomes acute due to the politician’s awareness of the process of history and their place in it and thus may tend to offer interviewers expected and accepted accounts of history.<sup>215</sup>

This is especially true if interviews are done soon after a subject leaves government service, when records are still classified, and ‘the motives for self-serving statements may be the strongest.’<sup>216</sup> Another pitfall with interviewing public officials ‘is getting them to break out of the “canned” narratives that they have so often repeated to the public, to the press, or in the classroom. Some former officials stick to such habits even years after the need for such public relations management has lapsed.’<sup>217</sup> Although I attempted to bypass this through polite confrontation, I also done so through interviewing people who work or had worked in the press. By doing so, I aimed to gain alternative perspectives from those outside of administrations who, at certain moments throughout their careers, publicly questioned and scrutinised official narratives around policy choices that perhaps could have influenced how officials responded to questions posed during this study’s oral history interviews.

There are still deeper issues with which to contend when undertaking oral history. These primarily relate to the concept of memory. John Lukacs asserted history was the ‘remembered past, Peter Burke wrote of ‘history as social memory,’ and Patrick Hutton defined ‘history as an art of memory.’<sup>218</sup> Notwithstanding the debates over the philosophical

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<sup>214</sup> Lynn Abrams, ‘Chapter 4: Memory as Both Source and Subject of Study: The Transformations of Oral History,’ in Stefan Berger & Bill Niven, *Writing the History of Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 89-90.

<sup>215</sup> James Cooper, *Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan: A Very Political Special Relationship* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 26.

<sup>216</sup> Jonathan Soffer, ‘Oral History and the History of American Foreign Relations.’ *The Journal of American History* 82:2 (1995), 607-616 (p. 609).

<sup>217</sup> Soffer, p. 609.

<sup>218</sup> Peter Burke, ‘History as Social Memory,’ in Thomas Butler (ed), *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (New York: Basil Blackwell); Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Vermont: University of

differences between memory and history, it is essential for the oral historian to grasp the ways in which ‘retrospective constructions of the past are themselves historically conditioned – shaped, in other words, by the very flow of past events and experiences at which their selective and creative backward gaze is directed.’<sup>219</sup> This is because recollections are relative to participants’ own experiences. In the case of this thesis, interviewees mainly constituted those who served in Executive Branch of the American government, such as in the National Security Council, or in the media as commentators, editors, and correspondents.<sup>220</sup> In their realms of work, interviewees shed light on the conceptually abstract nature of doctrines as well as how doctrines played varying roles and served varying purposes for these individuals.

For my oral history interviews, therefore, I focused on individual subjectivities which related to the general experiences surrounding the writing, the discussion, and/or the implementation of doctrines. As we shall see throughout this thesis, while the unneutral and politicized nature of identifying and defining a doctrine was witnessable in the primary source material, especially the editorial and political commentary of the times, the motivations as to why administrations endorse doctrines by name, why they do not, and why the media constantly seek and provide their own definitions could not have been fully understood without probing the motivations behind the actors serving within these institutions in their doing so. In turn, although the study is not a strict oral history project in and of itself, the method has served to reveal more about the mentalities and assumptions on which policy choices were based through memory.<sup>221</sup>

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Vermont Press); John Luckacs, *Historical Consciousness, or the Remembered Past* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>219</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 49.

<sup>220</sup> It should be noted, however, that I was unable to interview the biggest players in the decision-making process, such as presidents, national security advisers, or secretaries of state. While this was not due to my own persistence, this potentially causes blind spots regarding the strategic intent and decision-making processes behind certain choices made. However, no historical study can ever have the ‘full picture’ given the unavailability of all sources pertinent to the actual decision. For debates into the validity of the historical inquiry itself, see: [Carr, Richard Evans, and Postmodern critique literature]

<sup>221</sup> Written response from Peter Feaver, February 8, 2023. Peter Feaver, who served on the National Security Councils of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, provided an insider’s perspective when he corresponded to the

The production and survival of historical sources used in this thesis, such as documents from the online presidential libraries or the State Department's Office of the Historian, reflect earlier efforts to either hold on to elements of a past reality that may be in danger of being forgotten, as well as to influence the retrospective judgements of posterity. In this light, memory becomes more seductive. This is because 'memory operates on numerous levels in the transmission both of the information that ends up being encapsulated in historical source materials and of the ideas that shape the way these materials are interpreted.'<sup>222</sup> This is especially important when studying the history of American foreign relations. We can see examples of its importance when we look at the oral history projects of presidential libraries and the Miller Center at the University of Virginia. Henry Kissinger's biographer, Walter Isaacson, based his work largely on 150 interviews, which he conducted himself.<sup>223</sup> Kissinger himself is quoted as saying, "What is written in diplomatic documents never bears much relation to reality...I could never have written by Metternich dissertation based on documents if I had known what I know now."<sup>224</sup> This implies that un-supplemented documentary records may be as misleading as some consider oral ones to be.<sup>225</sup>

The questions posed to participants invited these former officials, and media personnel, to tell me what they thought about the concept of a doctrine, in which realm they believed it was most influential (within the bureaucracy as a guide for policy or within political discourse), why they are so frequently employed in the political discourse of American foreign policy, and to specific questions pertaining to their work experiences and the extent to which presidential doctrine (however they were understood by the interviewee)

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author that, 'A doctrine is not the same as a policy. We have a "policy" on virtually everything, from significant to trivial. The "policy" governs our default behaviour – as in, "it is our policy not to grant Oval Office visits to leaders from such-and-such a country" – and to override the policy takes some persuasive argument. A "doctrine" usually refers to more consequential "policies" and usually has a grand strategy element or connection to it.'

<sup>222</sup> Cubitt, p. 51.

<sup>223</sup> Soffer, p. 608.

<sup>224</sup> Soffer, p. 609.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. p. 609.

was significant in the course of their work. Interviewees always gave their consent, and the practical methodology of interviews was considered. The interviews, and the written responses, were fascinating. Many individuals were approached for interviews. Most requests were declined. Interviews were undertaken online via Zoom.<sup>226</sup> The questions asked included mainly open questions, but also some specific ones. All provided in-depth responses.

Although each participant's conception of what a doctrine is, its function, and for what purposes it is generally produced slightly differed, their responses contributed to the study's argument regarding the role doctrines have saliently played during different administrations facing distinctive challenges in foreign policy. A broad range of interviewees has been included. From administration officials of varying ranks and in varying departments, including the National Security Council and the State Department, to senior editors and reporters for big news companies, and media commentators these interviews were opportunities to gauge how insiders and outsiders thought about the notion of the presidential doctrine. My oral history interviews have supplemented and complemented the written record on presidential doctrines in American history and the history of the period under study.

### **Contribution**

This thesis will make several important contributions to the developing historiography on presidential doctrines. The project will be the first to provide a comprehensive historical analysis of how the concept worked for and against the interests of their namesakes to legitimize their policy choices in real time. By interrogating the record during four presidencies for how each president's leadership over foreign policy was rationalized and

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<sup>226</sup> Some participants preferred to be sent questions via a Word document to provide written responses instead of a (virtual) face-to-face interview. Where such responses are quoted, they will be referenced as 'Written response from' as opposed to 'Interview with.' All written responses are quoted exactly as the participant wrote them.

scrutinized according to third party actors' understandings of their doctrines, and the conduct of oral history interviews to grasp what officials and those in the media understand the role of doctrines to be, this will shed new light on the legitimizing and delegitimizing functions of the specific use of doctrinal language in the discourse of foreign policy. In this light, the author's interviews with former officials and journalists who shared their opinions on the influence and role of presidential doctrines will need to be taken into consideration by future scholars.

Such a study is also a timely endeavour since, as Aiden Warren and Joseph Siracusa noted in their 2022 edition of *Understanding Presidential Doctrines*, the term 'doctrine' has reattained 'charged prominence in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and, more recently, in regard to the contested debates surrounding the controversial transition to the Biden administration.'<sup>227</sup> Further, despite the differences in how presidents approached their foreign policy challenges, employed rhetoric in their foreign policy discourse, the thesis will provide new interpretations as to why certain presidents endorsed and associated themselves with their own doctrine and why others resisted doing so. Thus, prompting future scholarship on doctrines to consider the political motivations, rather than focusing on the grand strategic ones, as to why presidents endorsed a doctrine or did not.

### **Thesis Structure**

The introductory chapter has provided the reader with an introduction into how the thesis operationalizes the concept of the presidential doctrine and how it intends to study its role in the critique of foreign policy choices. Therefore, this introductory chapter has outlined the

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<sup>227</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. xiii.

scope of the thesis, the research questions, and the themes being introduced as it pertains to how doctrines can work to either sustain or undermine the legitimation of policy choices.

Chapter one will explore why proponents and opponents of the president's agenda, whether in media or inside administrations, seek to attribute a doctrinal significance to a set of choices or statements in real time. The chapter will thus investigate the varying roles that doctrines play from administration to administration, why certain administrations endorse or reject becoming associated with one, and why the media frequently define doctrines as well as press presidents to espouse and define one.

Chapters two, three, four, and five will interrogate how the varying presidential doctrines respectively associated with Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush were discursively weaponized to undermine and sustain the legitimation of these presidents' desired courses of action throughout their presidencies.

Finally, the concluding chapter will more forcefully present the parallels, contrasts, and comparisons between the discursive expressions of the Reagan, Clinton, and both Bush doctrines. Further, it shall explore what implications the thesis has for future understandings about presidential doctrines, their role for American foreign policy in an ever evolving and changing world, and how this study can serve as a benchmark for future studies.

## Chapter 1

### **The Roles of Presidential Doctrines in the Legitimation of Foreign Policy Choices**

#### **Introduction**

Presidents articulate their foreign policy ideas in response to more immediate political concerns and ‘their broader doctrinal significance becomes apparent years later.’<sup>1</sup> However, this chapter will explore why proponents and opponents of the president’s agenda, whether in media or in politics, seek to attribute a doctrinal significance to a set of choices or statements in real time. This is to understand how their doing so works for and against the president’s interests to advance their agendas. In turn, the characterization of presidential doctrines either bolsters or weakens the legitimacy of presidential actions, depending on how officials and observers understand, present, and/or define the sanctioning doctrine, and the actions it purportedly rationalizes. In this light, the significance of associating presidents with specific doctrines to rationalize or undermine certain ideas, policies, and statements lies not in the objective codification of ideas, policies, and statements, but in the subjective interpretation of what these things imply – to the beholder – for American foreign policy.

Thus, the chapter argues that presidential doctrines are – by their nature – fluid and contested concepts, shaped and defined in the moment by political actors inside and outside of the administration and media actors who interpret and deploy them for political and/or rhetorical purposes. In this way, doctrines play varying roles for decisionmakers themselves from administration to administration. Those roles include serving as a guideline for officials as a way of knowing what the president has in mind, justifying choices as part of a broader understanding of the world, and to signal a departure from previous modes of foreign policy

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<sup>1</sup> Aiden Warren & Joseph M. Siracusa, *Understanding Presidential Doctrines: U.S. National Security from George Washington to Joe Biden* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022). p. xiv

towards specific issues and regions. The extent to which a doctrine is influential inside an administration depends on whether the administration is sanctioning an agenda as such as a tool for change within the bureaucracies by conveying the president's broader understanding of the world and America's role within it.<sup>2</sup> As Colin Gray argued: 'Doctrine *per se* is a box empty of content until organizations decide how much of it they want, and how constraining they wish it to be.'<sup>3</sup> Consequently, a doctrine is sometimes endorsed as a way to mobilize the administration, and the public writ large, behind the president's foreign policy.

However, other administrations have not wished to confer a doctrine upon their initiatives and plans themselves, as was the case with George H.W. Bush (1989-1993) and Bill Clinton (1993-2001) studied later. Even if such administrations provided consistent indications about the direction of their overarching foreign policies toward specific regions and issues, its leading officials were not comfortable in framing their agendas as being part of a presidential doctrine out of fear of needing to contradict the doctrine, if circumstances changed, later down the line. Thereby emphasizing the need to assuage charges of inconsistency in action.<sup>4</sup> As will be explored throughout the thesis, such charges are often incorporated into actors' scrutiny of presidential doctrines.

This chapter will be structured into two main sections. The first section will investigate how officials think about doctrines conceptually and their influence on decision-making. Utilizing the author's oral history interviews, unique to this thesis, we can gain deeper insights into how policymakers, and people in the media, think about the relationship between policy choosing and doctrines. In this light, the second section will be more focused on why the media often press presidents to define their doctrines and label their initiatives as

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<sup>2</sup> John Nisser, 'Implementing Military Doctrine: A Theoretical Model,' *Comparative Strategy* 40:3 (2021), 305-314 (pp. 306-307). As a tool of change, Nisser argued, 'doctrines can prescribe new operational behaviours, which are then implemented within the organization.'

<sup>3</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 35-36.

<sup>4</sup> Katarina Brodin, 'Belief Systems, Doctrines, and Foreign Policy,' *Cooperation and Conflict* 7:2 (1972), 97-112 (pp. 105-108).

such. This is necessary because this dynamic will play out throughout the subsequent four chapters. This section will show that the media plays a formative role in the discursive production of presidential doctrines with significant implications for the legitimization of policy choices.

### **The Role of Doctrine in Foreign Policy Decision-Making**

Whereas foreign policy is the mechanism governments use to guide their interactions and relationships with other countries, decision making ‘refers to the choices individuals, groups, and coalitions make that affect a nation’s actions on the international stage.’<sup>5</sup> Broadly conceived, a decision ‘is the political act of the whole body politic. Narrowly viewed, it is the face-to-face determination of controversial or uncertain courses of action.’<sup>6</sup> The term ‘choice,’ according to Harold Lasswell, is applied to situations where the individual or group ‘has at least a degree of freedom in selecting or interpreting goals and strategies.’<sup>7</sup> Since the way decisions are made can shape the eventual choice, an actor ‘could arrive at different outcomes depending on the decision process.’<sup>8</sup> In this way, Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen argue that foreign policy decision making consists of four components: identifying the decision problem, searching for alternatives, choosing an alternative, and executing the alternative.<sup>9</sup>

However, there is a debate between those that suggest structure is more significant in determining policy choices as opposed to those who emphasize human agency.<sup>10</sup> Those who subscribe to understanding decision-making through theoretical frameworks such as path

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<sup>5</sup> Alex Mintz & Karl DeRouen jr., *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Harold D. Lasswell, ‘Current Studies of the Decision Process: Automation Versus Creativity,’ *The Western Political Quarterly* 8:3 (1955), 381-399 (p. 381).

<sup>7</sup> Lasswell, p. 381.

<sup>8</sup> Mintz & Karl DeRouen jr., p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Mintz & Karl DeRouen jr., p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Jarrod Hayes, ‘Agency and Structure in Foreign Policy Analysis,’ *Politics* (2018), 1-15.

dependency and historical institutionalism argue that organizations and people do not make decisions in a vacuum as they are products of a multitude of interplaying factors, including: institutional settings, historical and political contexts, precedent, and routine.<sup>11</sup> Contrarily, others view the leaders in charge as having autonomy over the way they confront the circumstances at hand and interact with the institutions within which they find themselves.<sup>12</sup> In this light, Hermann et al. suggested that decisionmakers are motivated in either one of two ways.<sup>13</sup> The first group are driven by ideology and purpose and they set goals and work to achieve them. Alternatively, the other group is contextually sensitive and seeks to respond to the situations they find themselves in.<sup>14</sup>

Hermann et al. found that the goal driven group perceive the world ‘through a lens that is structured by belief, attitudes, motives, and passions.’<sup>15</sup> Contextually sensitive leaders, such as George H.W. Bush and Clinton– another example of which is Tony Blair – tend not to view the world through a lens, or doctrine, to maximize their options whereas presidents driven by goals and purposes, such as Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) and George W. Bush (2001-2009), ‘will pursue a narrow agenda that attempts to push America’s foreign policy in the direction of their vision.’<sup>16</sup> These lines are, nonetheless, blurred. During an interview for this study, long-time media commentator and columnist for *The Washington Post*, E.J.

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<sup>11</sup> Anika C. Leithner & Kyle M. Libby, ‘Path Dependency in Foreign Policy,’ *Oxford Research Encyclopaedias* (2017), p. 2 - <https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-376?d=%2F10.1093%2Facrefore%2F9780190228637.001.0001%2Facrefore-9780190228637-e-376&p=emailAwPwlwAAGS8L>

<sup>12</sup> Stephen J. Walker, ‘Psychology of Presidential Decision-Making,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 556-557.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret G Hermann et al., ‘Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals,’ *International Studies Review* 2:1 (2003), 83-131 (p. 86).

<sup>14</sup> James Bilsland, *The President, the State, and the Cold War: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Presidents Truman and Reagan* (Glasgow: Routledge, 2013), p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> Hermann et al., p. 87

<sup>16</sup> Bilsland, p. 30.; ‘The President’s News Conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom in London,’ Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, *Public Papers of the President of the United States, William J Clinton. Presidential Document. 1997*, p. 672. During a press conference with Clinton, Blair declared that, ‘But we agreed, too, and have for some time, that this is a new era which calls for a new generation politics and a new generation leadership. This is the generation that prefers reason to doctrine, that is strong in ideals but indifferent to ideology.’

Dionne, told the author in an interview for this study that ‘there are moments when political leaders over time themselves offer fairly consistent indications of the directions they’re going to move on a great many issues, and it is possible for them to claim to have a doctrine or for others to see something coherent.’<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Dionne remarked, it ‘does not mean a doctrine guides every decision.’<sup>18</sup>

### Doctrine as an Expression of the President’s Worldview

According to Katarina Brodin, in decision-making, the role of the doctrine is to serve as ‘a system of normative and empirical beliefs about the international system and the role of one’s own country in that system, as declared in public by the official decision-makers of that country.’<sup>19</sup> While Jeffrey Michaels argues that there is a difference between a doctrinal statement intended purely for a public or foreign audience and one that is of executive intent for the bureaucracy to follow, Kenneth Adelman, Ronald Reagan’s Director of Arms Control, told the author in an interview for this study that, ‘Doctrines are very important. Why are they important? Because they give you a guidance, in general terms, on what the president has in mind.’<sup>20</sup> Which is, in turn, important, said Adelman, since when officials are working in an administration, ‘you want some kind of guidance, a lot of them want some kind of guidance on how to proceed.’<sup>21</sup> Adelman compared Reagan’s leadership to Jimmy Carter’s (1977-1981) by stating to the author that the latter:

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Katarina Brodin, ‘Belief Systems, Doctrines, and Foreign Policy,’ *Cooperation and Conflict* 7:2 (1972), 97-112 (p. 104).; The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defines doctrine, in the context of the military, as ‘fundamental principles by which the military forces guide their actions in support of objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgement in application.’ See: AAP-6 *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions* - [https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/05\\_AAP/AAP-06\\_2020\\_EF\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/05_AAP/AAP-06_2020_EF_(1).pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Kenneth Adelman, March 13, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Kenneth Adelman, March 13, 2023.

looked at each individual issue and decided how to approach it. You know, in a thoughtful and careful way, but at each individual issue. So, somebody in my position with Carter, which I was not, would have a hard time knowing: if I do this, would that be consistent with what the president wants, or not?<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding the debates about whether Carter pursued a consistent grand strategy, Adelman's response emphasizes this disparity between presidents who emphasize vision and others who are contextually driven and thus emphasize pragmatism.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, what becomes framed as a president's doctrine can be important in foreign policy decision making to the extent that it can be understood by officials as an expression of where the president places value in foreign policy.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, this depends on whether the higher officials in the administration continuously emphasize this value and enforce their initiatives in such a manner that the rest of the administration knows there would be consequences to deviate from the declared path.

In this light, Kori Schake, who served in several high positions in the Defense and State Departments and the National Security Council under Clinton and George W. Bush, corresponded to the author that doctrines 'can be important in getting the bureaucracy aligned in support of the President's priorities, but only if there's consensus at the top of the Administration or the White House enforces compliance. Mostly doctrinal statements like the

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Kenneth Adelman, March 13, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Robb, *Jimmy Carter and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 32. Robb argued that, 'The challenges posed by the need to balance human rights considerations with geopolitical calculations created intense inter-departmental feuding amongst the president's closest advisers.' In this light, 'there was no coherent grand strategy' because policy would be analyzed individually; particularly as it pertained to how much emphasis would be placed upon human rights considerations.

<sup>24</sup> Daneta G. Billau, PhD Thesis: 'Clinton's Foreign Policy and the Politics of Intervention: Cases of Ethnic Cleansing and Democratic Governance,' *Old Dominion University* (2002), p. 1 - [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis\\_etds/29/](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds/29/).

National Security Strategy are of little salience.’<sup>25</sup> This was echoed by Clinton’s first National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake (1993-1997), who later said that a lot of the strategy ‘comes more through presidential speeches than through the documents.’<sup>26</sup> The significance of this is that the role of a doctrine as a guiding mechanism for officials is, according to these testimonies, partly contingent on the extent to which doctrines are enforced from the top; without clear alignment and authoritative reinforcement, doctrines may serve more as rhetorical tools than as binding directives in foreign policy decision-making.<sup>27</sup>

For example, the various doctrines of the Cold War sometimes served as bureaucratic and/or rhetorical guidelines, but (like all presidential doctrines) had no standing in law. Further, specific aspects of Cold War policies, whether Eisenhower’s New Look or Kennedy’s Flexible Response, had to be presented to Congress in budgetary or treaty form; and, even in those instances, they were not signed off as a doctrine or a policy, but were highly contested pieces and parts of American foreign policy which these presidents had to effectively communicate to legitimize to the polity.<sup>28</sup> However, not all Cold War presidents

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<sup>25</sup> Written response from Kori Schake – July 9, 2024; Public Law 99-433 – Oct .1, 1986. Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. - [https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod\\_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDReordAct1986.pdf](https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDReordAct1986.pdf). This act sought to reorganize the Department of Defense and strengthen civilian authority in it, improve the military advice provided to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense and to ‘increase attention to the formulation of strategy and to contingency planning, to provide for more efficient use of defense resources.’ This act mandated the administration publish a *National Security Strategy* updating Congress on its plans to shift national strategy.

<sup>26</sup> James D. Boys, *Clinton’s Grand Strategy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 267.

<sup>27</sup> Heiko Meiertons, *The Doctrines of U.S. Security Policy: An Evaluation under International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 6. Meiertons shows that the use of the term ‘doctrine’ in the English-speaking world ‘differs widely and refers to different levels of strategic planning. Certain concepts, considered by American strategic planners as “doctrinal,” are considered by British planners as “operational.”’

<sup>28</sup> For scholarship on Dwight Eisenhower’s foreign policy, see: Robert M. Filipink jr., *Dwight Eisenhower and American Foreign Policy During the 1960s: An American Lion in Winter* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), p. ix.; Chester J. Pach & Elmo Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991); Michael J. Birkner, “‘More to Induce Than Demand’: Eisenhower and Congress,” *Congress & the Presidency* 40:2 (2013), 165-194. For scholarship on John F. Kennedy, see: Denise M. Bostdorff & Steven R. Goldzwig, ‘Idealism and Pragmatism in American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Case of John F. Kennedy and Vietnam,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24:3 (1994), 515-530. Kennedy balanced idealistic and pragmatic arguments. Idealistic appeals ‘legitimized his Vietnam policy and depicted himself as a principled leader. The President’s pragmatic appeals helped him deflect criticism, justify slow progress, and build an image of expertise.’; James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2006).

adhered to consistent policies or nuclear strategies, as the conflict's complexity and evolving nature required a flexible mix of diplomatic and military responses.<sup>29</sup> Some presidents preferred to maintain a more flexible approach to containment, such as John F. Kennedy (1961-1963), adapting their approach as tensions evolved.<sup>30</sup>

Despite presidents, such as Kennedy, making pragmatic appeals for both strategic and public relations reasons, doctrines – that being a system of normative and empirical beliefs about the international system and the role of one's own country in that system, as declared in public by the official decision-makers of that country – are useful for officials to comprehend as derivatives of a larger strategy. Henry Nau, a staffer on Ronald Reagan's National Security Council, told the author in an interview for this study that, 'Doctrines are generally used, at least in my experience, for more targeted, more focused parts of a foreign policy. It doesn't necessarily deal with the foreign policy as a whole.'<sup>31</sup> Nau declared, in the case of Reagan, the Reagan doctrine was targeted at countries and conflicts on the periphery of the Cold War, rather than the central conflict in Europe and Asia.<sup>32</sup>

To the extent that an administration seeks to adhere to a set of principles and choices, and/or outlines criteria for the potential use of force under specific contingencies, doctrines can still be too broad to be practical and too narrow to be effective in a global sense. For a presidential doctrine to be strategically effective, Billau suggested, it needs to have a global overriding policy that is worded in a way that lends to the successful use of regional applications.<sup>33</sup> In this light, during an interview for this study, former Chief of Staff to Vice President Dan Quayle (1989-1993), Bill Kristol, highlighted the subjective nature of

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<sup>29</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2007); John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Jason K. Duncan, *John F. Kennedy: The Spirit of Cold War Liberalism* (Michigan: Routledge, 2014); Louise Fitzsimons, *The Kennedy Doctrine* (New York: Random House, 1972).

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Billau, pp. 2-3.

interpreting policies and statements as doctrines. In response to a question about whether doctrines serve any purpose within administrations, he explained that while they may not always be explicitly labelled as such, they still influence policy – as a broad outline of the president’s goals on specific matters – by shaping policy direction, setting boundaries, and making certain choices more viable than others.<sup>34</sup> ‘There is a very iterative process,’ Kristol continued, ‘where people make a decision and react to an event, are surprised by an event. And then a doctrine grows up out of a bunch of reactions and actions and justifications and controversies and so forth.’<sup>35</sup> Peter Feaver, a National Security Council staffer in the Clinton and Bush administration, corresponded to the author as part of this study that doctrines ‘reflect the president’s way of thinking about the world that is very consequential...they have traction if and only if they reflect how the president really is thinking and trying to behave.’<sup>36</sup>

According to such testimonies, a doctrine can impact decision-making by reinforcing the positions of some officials within the administration while weakening others, as it reflects the president’s strategic priorities.<sup>37</sup> Beyond shaping internal dynamics in such ways, doctrines can also be deployed to influence broader public discourse by framing policies within a larger worldview.<sup>38</sup> However, Kristol cautioned that, ‘There is a little bit of a false impression that you write a doctrine and other people go and dutifully implement it. But that’s not how the real-world works.’<sup>39</sup> Kristol’s recollection reinforces the point that what some inside an administration refer to as a doctrine is a way for policymaking officials to interpret the direction the president wants to go on a set of issues, and thereby attempt to alter the balance of power inside the bureaucracies, by swaying them toward particular courses of

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Peter Feaver, February 8, 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

action that the doctrine makers claim are in accordance with the president's stated purposes.<sup>40</sup>

At this stage, it is necessary to consider the importance of using the word 'doctrine,' and what power comes from it.

In short, a lot. Psychologists and linguistic scholars have long recognized that giving something a name 'makes it real.'<sup>41</sup> Aristotle acknowledged that giving names to previously nameless things is an effective way of better grasping something fresh.<sup>42</sup> Former Chief Justice Roberts once remarked in an oral argument, when discussing something called the '*Blackledge-Menna* doctrine' that, "It's you know, it's obvious the key word is doctrine. It suggests to me that there's more covered by that than just *Blackledge* and *Menna*."<sup>43</sup> Ali Orr Larsen thus argued that becoming a doctrine matters since the strategic use of this label is 'not lost on the astute attorney,' or, for our purposes, politician.<sup>44</sup> This is because it connotes certain directions to courts and bureaucracies which incentivizes those with an agenda to confer further legitimacy on their desired outcomes to deploy the word strategically because, as Larsen has shown in the legal sphere, it affects the number of claims filed to courts as well as influence how courts deal with those claims.<sup>45</sup>

In this light, while reflecting on his time as a foreign correspondent, Greg Myre told the author that when he was covering the many conflicts the America has been involved in the past few decades, he wondered from a distance: 'what's going on in Washington? And how is this being assessed? You know, what is the big thinking going on? Now that I am in Washington, I just see it and there's so much day-to-day pressure. The urgent always tends to

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<sup>40</sup> Philip Zelikow, 'The Atrophy of American Statecraft,' *Foreign Affairs* (December 12, 2023) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/atrophy-american-statecraft-zelikow>

<sup>41</sup> David E. Leary, 'Naming and Knowing: Giving Forms to Things Unknown,' *Social Research* 62:2 (1995), 267-298 (pp. 267-268)

<sup>42</sup> Leary, pp. 267-268.

<sup>43</sup> Alli Orr Larsen, 'Becoming a Doctrine,' *William & Mary Law School Research Paper No. 09-467, Florida Law Review*, Vol. 76, 2023. - [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4374736](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4374736), p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> Larsen p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Larsen, p. 50.

overtake the long-term.’<sup>46</sup> This is why, Myre asserted, it is important for presidents to present clear statements for what they are trying to do.<sup>47</sup> If one asks Americans why they should be fighting in the Persian Gulf or supporting Afghan rebels, many would not have an answer, ‘but if there’s a doctrine, then okay, the reason is you’re trying to push back communism; you’ve got something to glom on to...you need that so you can keep the American people on board.’<sup>48</sup>

However, this phenomenon of labelling policy initiatives as a doctrine can also work to undermine an administration’s efforts to enforce its priorities within the bureaucracies. Information theory asserts that data compression is the process ‘of encoding information using fewer bits than the original representation.’<sup>49</sup> Though the reason for doing so is for ease of transfer, the transfer comes with a loss of data and the compression ‘loses context and texture.’<sup>50</sup> In turn, labelling an entire strategic agenda toward international relations, such as George H.W. Bush’s beyond containment or Clinton’s democratic enlargement, as these presidents’ doctrines also contributes to a loss of context and texture. This loss of context arises because the continuities within an administration’s foreign policy, such as inherited legacies from predecessors, are often obscured when a new strategic agenda or approach to an inherited policy is reductively labelled as a distinct presidential doctrine.

In 1992, Vice President-elect Al Gore responded to a question about whether the Clinton administration’s approach to the crisis in Somalia, a policy inherited from the previous administration, would require a ‘doctrine-like statement’ saying that there is always a tendency ‘to take a specific set of circumstances and try to lock it into some grandiose doctrine that then creates pressure to use similar force in all kinds of other situations. And

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Larsen, p. 52.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

that need not be done in this case.’<sup>51</sup> By avoiding associating policies with a concept that can be potentially construed as dogmatic, presidents and their administrations can adapt more dynamically to changing international circumstances and threats without being constrained by a predefined framework, intimately associated with the president, that may become a hostage to fortune. For example, after being asked by the moderator during the Democratic Presidential Debate in 2007 what would the ‘short version of the Obama doctrine’ be, Barack Obama responded that it would not be as doctrinaire as the Bush doctrine ‘because the world is complicated. And I think part of the problem we’ve had is that ideology has overridden facts and reality.’<sup>52</sup> Emphasizing this necessity for those in Washington to maintain a level of flexibility, the long-time foreign correspondent Greg Myre told the author that the downside of a doctrine is that it can oversimplify what the administration is trying to do.<sup>53</sup>

Myre responded to a question asking whether in his experience he thought doctrines influenced policymaking with: ‘To try and come up with a doctrine and follow though I think is almost impossible. Even if it didn’t get interrupted, reality would change.’<sup>54</sup> ‘Okay,’ Myre said, ‘I’m for rolling back communism. Does that mean everywhere? Does that mean American troops have to fight there? Is it working? All of these are complicated questions.’<sup>55</sup> Taking Clinton as an example, an undated memo written by Clinton’s speechwriter, Edward Widmer, hinted that the administration did flirt with the prospect of framing the Kosovo intervention decision as a doctrine.<sup>56</sup> Under a subheading titled ‘Applying the Doctrine,’ the memo read that the U.S. could not afford to respond to ethnic violence everywhere nor could it justify responding to it nowhere. ‘No matter how clear our principles,’ Widmer wrote, ‘we

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<sup>51</sup> John Omicinski, ‘Clinton Doctrine: One Size Fits All,’ *The News-Messenger* (December 14, 1992), p. 4. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/304464613/?terms=Clinton%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>52</sup> ‘Transcript: Democratic Presidential Debate on NPR,’ *The New York Times* (December 4, 2007) - <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/04/us/politics/04transcript-debate.html>

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>56</sup> National Security Council, Speechwriting Office, and Edward (Ted) Widmer, ‘Clinton Doctrine,’ undated. *Clinton Digital Library* - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/11424>

will not achieve perfect consistency, nor should we be paralysed by overly rigid criteria. In most cases, we will do what we can, weighing the nature and magnitude of the violence and our capacity to make a difference.’<sup>57</sup> In turn, ‘the doctrine we suggest would require us to take appropriate action where there is a deliberate, systematic campaign to uproot or destroy a people because of who they are. It would clearly apply to Bosnia, Kosovo and to Rwanda. It would arguably apply to Sudan.’<sup>58</sup> In this context, what Myre’s response underscores is that all presidents, including presidents whose ideas about foreign policy were supposedly guided more so by their convictions, such as Reagan and George W. Bush, still weighed decisions based on the multitude of factors at play when executing a particular policy.<sup>59</sup> And their decisions to intervene in certain arenas, such as in Eastern Europe, Central America or the Middle East, were partially products of a series of previous decisions made by previous administrations who had engaged with those regions through other means. These means created a set of new circumstances that the aforementioned presidents confronted when they assumed power.

In this light, Paul Wolfowitz, who served in both of these administrations, once said that the notion of a doctrine to give administrations a blueprint guideline was nonsense.<sup>60</sup> Those factors at play, therefore, range from the extent to which the current policy being undertaken is working, what potential alternatives could be, the extent of the threat against whom the policy is being employed to counter, how the policy could impact America’s geostrategic standing, and/or whether the armed forces could be used.<sup>61</sup> These considerations,

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<sup>57</sup> National Security Council, ‘The Clinton Doctrine,’ p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> James Bilsland, *The President, the State, and the Cold War: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Presidents Truman and Reagan* (Glasgow: Routledge, 2013), p. 218.

<sup>60</sup> NPR, ‘Interview: Wolfowitz on U.S. Role in Other Nations’ Affairs,’ *All Things Considered*, September 5, 2009. - <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112591394>

<sup>61</sup> Matthew Moten, *Presidents and Their Generals*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 3. Political-military relations ‘do not begin and end with the president giving orders and the general dutifully carrying them out, although that should and does occur. Instead, that interaction occurs after a process of intense and often contentious negotiation over the aims of the policy, the forms of strategy to be used, the resources to be employed, and the timing of execution, to name only the most major considerations.’

and more, are made when deciding on a course of action.<sup>62</sup> That is to say doctrinal declarations, which are nonetheless understood differently by different political actors at different moments, function less as policy roadmaps and more as flexible frameworks invoked to justify action, signal intent, or distance an administration from the perceived failure of its predecessors. As Henry Kissinger once said: while a decision in retrospect may appear to be random or as the only option available under the prevailing circumstances, ‘it is the result of the interaction of the whole sum of previous turnings – reflecting history or tradition of values – plus the immediate pressures of the need for survival.’<sup>63</sup> As an expression of the president’s worldview, doctrines can be weaponized internally to make certain options more attractive than others. With this in mind, the next subsection examines how presidential doctrines are not only shaped by evolving realities but also rhetorically deployed by top officials to repudiate prior approaches, recast past failures, and legitimize new directions in American foreign policy.

### Doctrine as a Tool to Repudiate Previous Approaches

Kori Schake wrote to the author that declaring a doctrine is important insofar as ‘there are big questions or paradigm-shattering events.’<sup>64</sup> This is because, Schake stated, ‘most of U.S. foreign policy gets decided between pretty narrow boundaries because there is such a broad consensus, and nobody’s persuasively put forward better answers than the status quo offers.’<sup>65</sup> Thus, while there has been more continuity in American foreign policy throughout history than the public discourse at certain moments – such as during election campaigns –

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<sup>62</sup> For a study into the role lobbying has played in foreign policy decision-making, see: John Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Penguin, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger 1923-1968: The Idealist* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), p. 453.

<sup>64</sup> Written response from Kori Schake – July 9, 2024.

<sup>65</sup> Written response from Kori Schake – July 9, 2024.

may have conveyed, for example with regards to its policy towards the western hemisphere, Israel's security and the Middle East, and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, there are moments when presidents need to declare a change within these broader continuities.<sup>66</sup> And, sometimes, a shift in course entirely towards security and trade agreements, emphases on specific regions as being more strategically important for American grand strategy than others, and/or whether force should be used instead of diplomacy toward specific adversaries.<sup>67</sup> Billau argued that doctrines are a tool for asserting distance 'because they tell the world the course that will be set by the leaders who articulate them. Second, presidential doctrine clarifies where the president places value. Doctrines are important strategically because they help communicate intent.'<sup>68</sup>

The efficacy of action in the presidential office 'is primarily a legitimization problem. Incumbents are engaged in a contest to control the meaning of actions.'<sup>69</sup> Candidates, presidents, and administrations writ large, therefore, need to carefully control the language they use toward the media to successfully communicate their intentions and the effects of their intentions as the administration would wish them to be perceived. During the 2007 Democratic Presidential Debate, an audience member asked the candidates: 'When future historians write of your administration's foreign policy pursuits, what will be noted as your doctrine and the vision you cast for U.S. diplomatic relations?''<sup>70</sup> While each candidate gave their own detailed definition of what they would like to see become known as their own doctrine, Sen. Joe Biden (D-Delaware) replied: 'Clarity. Prevention, not pre-emption. An

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<sup>66</sup> Henry Kissinger, 'Continuity and Change in American Foreign Policy,' *Society* 35:2 (1998), p. 184; J. Philipp Rosenberg, 'Presidential Beliefs and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Continuity During the Cold War Era,' *Political Psychology* 7:4 (1986), 733-751.

<sup>67</sup> Frank L. Klingberg, 'The Historical Alteration of Moods in American Foreign Policy' *World Politics* 4:1 (1969).

<sup>68</sup> Billau, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 17 & 27; Stephen Skowronek (ed), *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> 'Transcript: Democratic Presidential Debate on NPR.'

absolute repudiation of this president's doctrine which has only three legs on the stool. One, push the mute button, don't talk to anybody. Two, pre-emption. And three, regime change.'<sup>71</sup> Thus, 'the power to recreate order hinges on the authority to repudiate it' and, consequently, the 'authority to repudiate is the most formidable of all political resources for the exercise of leadership... The authority to repudiate fuses language and action, intention and effect.'<sup>72</sup>

In those few instances in American history when presidents have endorsed their own doctrine by name to communicate their ostensibly more radical shifts away from current approaches, they were produced in response to an event or a set of circumstances which necessitated more robust and bold responses.<sup>73</sup> For example, by the time Richard Nixon (1969-1974) came to power, Vietnam was assessed as a product of poor strategic decision-making and overextending resources. During a speech in Guam in late July 1969, Nixon declared that the U.S. would only supply material assistance to those nations willing to defend themselves against communism with their own manpower; rather than with ground troops which – it was argued – was the approach that led to the Vietnam war.<sup>74</sup> In Nixon's memoir, he recollected that in this speech he wanted to restate that the U.S. was a Pacific power and should remain so, but after Vietnam the country would need a new Asia policy to 'ensure no more Vietnams in the future' which, Nixon wrote, 'at first was called the Guam Doctrine and has since become known as the Nixon Doctrine.'<sup>75</sup> A major reason it became known as such was because the administration endorsed it as such.

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<sup>71</sup> 'Transcript: Democratic Presidential Debate on NPR.'

<sup>72</sup> Skowronek, p. 27.

<sup>73</sup> Courtesy of National Archives. Truman, Harry S., "Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947 - <https://history.iowa.gov/history/education/educator-resources/primary-source-sets/cold-war-vietnam/truman-doctrine-march-12>; Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People. (Washington D.C., September 20, 2001) - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>

<sup>74</sup> July 25, 1969: The Nixon Doctrine, *Richard Nixon Foundation* - <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2008/07/25-july-1969-the-nixon-doctrine/>

<sup>75</sup> Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon & Schuster), p. 394.

During a September 1970 press conference, a journalist asked National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger to clarify how recent presidential statements about America's role in the Mediterranean related to this new doctrine enunciated in Guam because it 'was not entirely clear.'<sup>76</sup> Kissinger responded by saying that, 'The objective of the Nixon doctrine continues to be one of the guidelines, or the guideline, of our foreign policy. We intend to shift an increasing amount of responsibility to our allies.'<sup>77</sup> Here, Kissinger specifically acknowledged and affirmed the existence of an operative presidential doctrine to legitimize the president's shifting emphasis on material support to Asian allies instead of American manpower; an implicit repudiation of previous policy of direct military intervention in regional conflicts. However, given the Nixon administration would begin a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia due to intelligence that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were directing their war effort in Vietnam from that country, the measures for which the doctrine supposedly stood were secondary to others Nixon had in mind for terminating the war in Vietnam.<sup>78</sup> The bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and of Cambodia occurred despite the administration's propagation of the doctrine to label a gradual extraction of American forces from the Vietnam conflict.<sup>79</sup> Put simply, Heiss wrote, 'Cold War doctrines' rhetoric rarely matched reality.'<sup>80</sup> Kimball argued that the Nixon doctrine did not constitute a doctrine 'in the sense of having been a grand strategy or a master set of principles and guidelines controlling policy decisions. Whether it was truly a doctrine or not, however, Nixon did not practice its principles consistently or even intend to do so when he first announced them.'<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Document 72. 'Background Press Briefing by the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs,' Naples, Italy, September 29, 1970. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972.*, p. 259.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 260.

<sup>78</sup> William Shawcross (ed), *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), p. 19.

<sup>79</sup> Jeffrey Kimball, 'The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (2006), 59-74 (p. 60).

<sup>80</sup> Mary Ann Heiss, 'Presidential Cold War Doctrines: What Are They Good For?' *Diplomatic History* 48:1 (2024), 1-19 (p. 19).

<sup>81</sup> Kimball, p. 60.

The significance of this is that by the administration explicitly associating itself with a doctrine, whether or not the way they defined it consistently reflected the reality of policymaking and content, their doing so was to wield it as a rhetorical tool. This was at a time when public support for military engagement was waning.<sup>82</sup> Thereby requiring the administration to publicly dissociate with the practices of escalation that led to the conflict, but also as adhering to a consistent framework of de-escalation.<sup>83</sup> The necessity to convey consistency in action, but also distinguish the administration from the escalatory practices of their predecessors was emphasized by the then director of the now dissolved United States Information Agency (U.S.I.A), Frank Shakespeare.<sup>84</sup> Shakespeare wrote a memorandum on January 7, 1970, to John Ehrlichman, an adviser to Nixon, proposing that the president should issue a presidential statement ‘extending the Nixon Doctrine beyond the confines of Asia.’<sup>85</sup> This was to show America was pursuing an integrated and consistent foreign policy toward non-communist countries around the world, ‘to increase the understanding and respect of both Americans and foreigners for our foreign policy,’ and to reassure that America seeks to avoid future wars like Vietnam but is not withdrawing as a major world power.<sup>86</sup>

As Heiss observed, doctrines ‘can demonstrate continuity and change within and across presidential administrations’ and, in the case of the Cold War, ‘illustrate the impact of the Cold War on the nation’s traditions and core values, and provide windows into shifting conceptions of Cold War national security.’<sup>87</sup> Four days after Shakespeare’s memo, on

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<sup>82</sup> Lydia Saad, ‘Gallup Vault: 1969 College Students’ Resistance to Vietnam,’ *Gallup* (March 16, 2018) - <https://news.gallup.com/vault/230501/gallup-vault-1969-college-students-resistance-vietnam.aspx>

<sup>83</sup> Frederik Logevall, ‘Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34:1 (2004), 100-112; Geoffrey Warner, ‘Review Article: Lyndon Johnson’s War? Part 1: Escalation,’ *International Affairs* 79:4 (2003), 829-853.

<sup>84</sup> Alvin Synder, *Warriors of Disinformation: How Lies, Videotape and the USIA Won the Cold War* (New York: Atlantic Books, 1995), p. xi.

<sup>85</sup> Document 65. ‘Memorandum From the Director of the United States Information Agency (Shakespeare) to the President’s Assistant (Ehrlichman), Washington, January 7, 1970. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917-1972, Volume VIII, Public Diplomacy, 1969-1972*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>86</sup> Document 65. ‘Memorandum From the Director of the United States Information Agency,’ pp. 141-142.

<sup>87</sup> Heiss, p. 19.

January 11, 1970, John Finney of *The New York Times* reported on the Nixon doctrine by stating that it ostensibly sought to lead the United States out of Asia militarily, but that there was still confusion over certain statements made by Nixon officials with the writer claiming that Vice President Spiro Agnew (1969-1973) supposedly emphasized ‘one feature of the doctrine one day, another not necessarily complementary feature the next day.’<sup>88</sup> For example, Bruce Morton of C.B.S. News asked Agnew directly on *Face the Nation* in early January 1970 about the latter’s recent trip to Asia during which, Morton claimed, there was a feeling that the ‘Nixon doctrine was getting a different emphasis on your tour,’ that there was more stress on the United States remaining a Pacific power, and ‘less on the idea of more Asian independence...was there a shift in emphasis you gave the doctrine?’<sup>89</sup> After Agnew responded saying there was an emphasis that regional cooperation still remained a top priority, even when American troops were gone, journalist George Herman interrupted and declared that countries such as Thailand felt that no change had been made and asked: ‘are we caught in semantics, here? Has there been a change toward a new Nixon policy or hasn’t there been a change at all?’<sup>90</sup> Consequently, prompting Agnew to define the distinction which the Nixon doctrine was publicly evoked to distinguish in the first place; that being to keep the United States an influential Pacific power, but doing so through increasing material support to allies in place of American manpower.

What the aforementioned exchange between Agnew and these journalists highlight is how the real-time debates surrounding the definition of a presidential doctrine, when offered by an administration, is still largely shaped by the media and journalists who seek clarity and coherence in how foreign policy develops. Their doing so, nonetheless, opens up the

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<sup>88</sup> John W. Finney, ‘The Nation,’ *The New York Times* (January 11, 1970) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/01/11/archives/the-nation-nixon-what-does-his-asian-doctrine-mean.html>

<sup>89</sup> From the Archives: Spiro Agnew on “Face the nation,” January 1970, *Face the Nation* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf3Krkik3os>. Foreign policy exchange at the 20-minute mark.

<sup>90</sup> From the Archives: Spiro Agnew on “Face the nation.”

possibility for the doctrine to be scrutinized for any inconsistency between how the doctrine was defined and how it is supposedly being executed. In this way, foreign correspondent Greg Myre told the author in an interview for this study that there is pressure for administrations to come up with a doctrine to explain where they are going on a particular issue which is why, he stated, ‘journalists will pester them and ask them questions,’ but a lot of times, presidents may not want to say they have a doctrine because every case they face is different.<sup>91</sup>

In this light, after being asked why it is that officials speak to reporters and tell them their intentions, national security reporter Greg Myre responded to the author saying that they understand that it is important for them to make their case and that,

The smarter officials realize, in administrations or the intelligence community, you *gotta* have that relationship and have an ongoing conversation and so people understand where you’re coming from, what you’re trying to do. And hopefully have a better understanding, and maybe even sympathy.<sup>92</sup>

In turn, administration officials understand that it is important to keep the media on-side as best they can by communicating what their intentions are. Former national security editor for *The New York Times*, Philip Taubman, told the author in an interview for this study that the first challenge as a journalist is trying to understand, interpret, and write about national security policy and the presidency as well as learning what the policies and operations are.<sup>93</sup> ‘That may sound a kind of silly point,’ Taubman said, but it is not because the president and their senior aides are determined ‘to keep many of their national security decisions secret.

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Greg Myre, October 3, 2023.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023.

And those that are publicly revealed manage them in a way that makes them look good. The journalist's challenge is to manage the spin from the White House.'<sup>94</sup>

To conclude, there have been moments throughout the history of American foreign policy when certain administrations felt it necessary to endorse certain agendas and initiatives as a doctrine. This section has shown that while doctrines are conceptually malleable, when they are endorsed, enforced, and publicly presented by top officials as a codified guideline for decision-making, they serve important roles as an expression of the president's worldview and agenda and as a way for the administration to legitimize a shift in course by repudiating previously adopted approaches through the doctrine. They do so by communicating intent by stressing where the president places value; geographically, politically, and strategically.<sup>95</sup> However, as the subsequent four chapters will show, from the moment presidents put themselves forward as candidates until their final year in office, it is the media who have constantly sought to label their positions on foreign policy matters as a doctrine named after the president that – in the majority of cases – presidents and their administrations do not endorse as such. At this juncture, we now need to explore why they do so.

### **The Media and the Definition of Presidential Doctrines**

In his 1928 work *Propaganda*, the father of public relations, Edward Bernays, argued that the 'conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society.'<sup>96</sup> Bernays wrote that with the rise of the printing

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023.

<sup>95</sup> Karen DeYoung, 'Allies Are Cautious On "Bush Doctrine."' *The Washington Post* (October 15, 2001) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/10/16/allies-are-cautious-on-bush-doctrine/9719022e-d6c4-4942-b9d0-735ba80a42f9/> As per Karen DeYoung's article that influenced the title of this thesis: 'The use of the word "doctrine" is intentional. It is meant to describe a new paradigm in U.S. foreign policy, a guiding principle through which other issues will be viewed and acted upon throughout the Bush presidency.'

<sup>96</sup> The New York Times, 'Edward Bernays, Father of Public Relations And Leader in Opinion Making, Dies at 103,' (March 10, 1995) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/10/obituaries/edward-bernays-father-public->

press and other forms of communication, ideas could be spread much more rapidly which created newer opportunities for political processes because labels and phrases ‘can now be given an effectiveness greater than the effectiveness of any personality and stronger than any sectional interest.’<sup>97</sup> The relevance of Bernays’ insights, here, is that they touch upon the utility for those with an interest in moulding public opinion about policy of labels and phrases to encapsulate ostensibly complicated phenomena, such as the nuances and multitude of factors at play in the formulation and execution of American foreign policy, which can help define a particular message around which to inform, mislead, and/or mobilize the public according to the interests of those executing policy.<sup>98</sup>

Philip Zelikow once wrote that the way in which people think about contemporary history is defined by critical people and events which go into forming the public’s presumptions about its immediate past.<sup>99</sup> Public presumption, as Zelikow put it, are beliefs thought to be true although not necessarily known to be true with certainty and which are shared in common with the political community.<sup>100</sup> History’s ‘narrative power is typically linked to how readers relate to the actions of individuals in history.’<sup>101</sup> The public’s understanding about historical events, therefore, is largely shaped by narratives and myths whose power ‘derives from their role in facilitating conversation, analysis, and understanding.’<sup>102</sup>

In this light, the media play an important role in the discursive production of presidential doctrines. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, as the previous section showed,

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[relations-leader-opinion-making-dies-103.html](https://www.scribd.com/document/151695026/Thinking-About-Political-History); Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928), pp. 9-10.

<sup>97</sup> Bernays, pp. 12-13.

<sup>98</sup> See also, Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (New York, 1923).

<sup>99</sup> The Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘Miller Center Report,’ *Vol. 14, No. 3/ Winter 99*, pp. 5-12 - <https://www.scribd.com/document/151695026/Thinking-About-Political-History>

<sup>100</sup> The Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘Miller Center Report.’

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. The sources of the presumptions are both personal (direct experience) and vicarious (books, movies, and myths).

only few administrations have publicly declared that they are adhering to a doctrine per se to maintain a level of flexibility in how it chooses, but also justifies those choices. Richard Clarke, a member of the National Security Council from 1992 to 2003, recalled to the author in an interview for this study, as it pertained to the use of the word ‘doctrine’ to label initiatives, that: ‘I think it has generally been done by columnists and commentators. We don’t have government documents released saying this is the “doctrine.”’<sup>103</sup> Secondly, and in this light, certain oral history interviews undertaken by the author indicate that outside observers utilize doctrines to label the president’s approach in their own terms to either rationalize or scrutinize the president’s statements and choices, in accordance with the preferences of the observer.

It is the friendly commentator, Clarke told the author, ‘Who says that I like the fact that you’re doing that, I want you to continue to do that and if I label you as that, you’ll have to do more. That goes on.’<sup>104</sup> Throughout the subsequent four chapters, we will see this theme frequently play out when commentators (and, sometimes, officials around them) sympathetic to a president’s approach will sometimes advise them through political and editorial commentary to declare a doctrine that aligns with commentator’s views and/or interests. In this light, E.J. Dionne told the author that ‘doctrines can be used to legitimize a president’s choices, and they are ‘offered by people on the outside to influence a president’s choices.’<sup>105</sup> As an observer, Dionne stated, ‘if you define a doctrine in a certain way, you are almost certainly trying to shape future decisions to accord with your own preferences as to where that president should go.’<sup>106</sup> Dionne admitted to the author that ‘I think I may have even

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<sup>103</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023. Refer to the introduction for a detailed discussion of the notion of legitimacy.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023. In the following chapter on Reagan, Dionne told the author that an interesting case study into how doctrines work was the relationship between the so-called Reagan doctrine and Charles Krauthammer, who is (wrongly) considered to be the progenitor of that term.

taken a crack at describing an Obama doctrine myself once upon a time. But I am sceptical of their impact and really see them as an outsider's effort to shape what a president is doing.' <sup>107</sup>

In this vein, Dionne declared:

Doctrines are imposed on a set of decisions by people on the outside, including the media, including commentators either to create coherence out of a set of decisions or to give them a shape that a commentator wants them to have by way of furthering policies that the commentator wants to advance. <sup>108</sup>

Though Dionne posited that doctrines are used 'to rationalize certain choices,' he also suggested to the author that they are used by 'outsiders to criticize choices as being inconsistent with the doctrines either as the politician proclaimed them or as the definer of the doctrine would proclaim them.' <sup>109</sup> What Dionne highlights here is that doctrines serve political functions pertaining to the legitimation and de-legitimation of presidential policy choices. They do so as rhetorical instruments wielded by external actors – especially the media and commentators – in attempts to both constrain and direct presidential behaviour. In shaping and promoting a doctrine, these outsiders assert and define a framework that not only interprets past actions but also attempts to create pressure to nudge future decisions to align with the commentator's framework. Dionne's reflection reveals the dual utility of doctrines: they can be affirmatively used to rationalize a president's agenda, or critically employed to highlight perceived inconsistencies and hold the administration accountable.

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023. See, E. J. Dionne, 'The Obama Doctrine,' *The Denver Post* (April 16, 2009) - <https://www.denverpost.com/2009/04/16/dionne-the-obama-doctrine/>; E. J. Dionne, 'Obama Outlines a Doctrine Where Restraint Makes Us Stronger,' *The Washington Post* (May 28, 2014) - [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ej-dionne-jr-obama-outlines-a-doctrine-where-restraint-makes-us-stronger/2014/05/28/6720db66-e69c-11e3-a86b-362fd5443d19\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ej-dionne-jr-obama-outlines-a-doctrine-where-restraint-makes-us-stronger/2014/05/28/6720db66-e69c-11e3-a86b-362fd5443d19_story.html). Dionne's writing on the Clinton doctrine will be addressed in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023.

In an age when communication technologies make it possible for everyone in the world to know a government decision or action the instant it occurs, narratives are offered as a means of structuring the discourse by offering anchor points for empirical analysis and assessments of decisions.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, a narrative recounts events in a way that ‘renders them intelligible, thus conveying not just information but also understanding.’<sup>111</sup> In the discourse surrounding doctrines, then, the media emerges not just as a passive reflector of presidential intent but as an active player in attempting to influence and narrate it. As both Clarke and Dionne suggest, the application of doctrinal labels often stems from a mix of ideological alignment, strategic messaging, and political persuasion, rather than from formal presidential articulation or objective codification.<sup>112</sup>

This is significant since before any of the presidents under study (and others) assumed power and made a foreign policy decision, commentators in the press were already providing their own definitions of what these presidents’ doctrines would be, as well as demanding the candidate define it, during their campaign.<sup>113</sup> Associating a candidate or president with a doctrine presented in a specific way, then, is a way to politically – and intimately – define their foreign policy leadership stance on a given issue. The voluminous references of

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<sup>110</sup> Kai Oppermann & Alexander Spencer, ‘Telling Stories of Failure: Narrative Constructions of Foreign Policy Fiascos,’ *Journal of European Public Policy* 23:5 (2016), 685-701.

<sup>111</sup> J. David Velleman, ‘Narrative Explanation,’ *The Philosophical Review* 112:1 (2003), 1-25 (p. 1).

<sup>112</sup> William G. Sumner (ed), *War and Other Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), pp. 36-38. The American intellectual William Sumner wrote in 1903: ‘Somebody asks you with astonishment and horror whether you do not believe in the Monroe Doctrine. You do not know whether you do or not, because you do not know what it is; but you do not dare to say that you do not, because you understand that it is one of the things which every good American is bound to believe in. Now when any doctrine arrives at that degree of authority, the name of it is a club which any demagogue may swing over you at any time and apropos of anything...Any politician or editor can, at any moment, put a new extension on it. The people acquiesce in the doctrine and applaud it because they hear the politicians and editors repeat it, and the politicians and editors repeat it because they think it is popular. So, it grows.’

<sup>113</sup> William D. Hartung, ‘Return to MAD-ness,’ *The Columbian* (December 25, 2000), p. 27. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/818286504/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>; Lee Iacocca, ‘Stop Hemorrhage of Red Ink and ’92 is Yours, George,’ *The Kansas City Times* (November 22, 1988), p. 47. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/681015012/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>, p. 47; A. M. Rosenthal, ‘On My Mind; The Clinton Doctrine,’ *The New York Times* (October 6, 1992) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/06/opinion/on-my-mind-the-clinton-doctrine.html>; Donald. M. Rothberg, ‘Strong Signals to Soviets Part of Reagan Doctrine,’ *The Bismarck Tribune* (February 1, 1980), p. 2 - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/346022664/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>

presidential doctrines provided from the beginning to the end of a presidency through journalistic simplifications of explicitly declared or implied foreign policy principles contribute to defining the namesake's political identity. As Stephen Skowronek noticed, in the modern era definition is something that must 'carefully cultivated, more assiduously protected, more vigorously asserted, more continuously affirmed.'<sup>114</sup> This is why the degree of consonance between doctrine and policy is partly dependent upon the way in which the decisionmakers define their sphere of competence and their ability to enforce this definition.<sup>115</sup>

Consequently, 'all advantage now would seem to lie with the strategically generated political persona, an identity designed to project as much clarity and determination as possible while still holding up against incessant broadsides.'<sup>116</sup> Presidential doctrines, therefore, can work to undermine the clarity and determination of their namesakes by being consistently defined by their opponents, in politics and media, in terms which undermine their justifications for actions undertaken. Conversely, those sympathetic to a president's agenda will defend their purported doctrines by providing definitional understandings that align and rationalize a president's choices through presenting it as necessary under the current circumstances and as being consistent with what the president had always – supposedly – promised he would do.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the varying roles played by presidential doctrines. By doing so, it has uncovered that their identification, invocation, and definition in real time – that being

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<sup>114</sup> Skowronek, p. 126.

<sup>115</sup> Brodin, p. 108.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

during the time that presidents are in office – affect the legitimation of policy choices in the following ways. Firstly, doctrines are inherently subjective constructs, shaped and reshaped by those who invoke them to serve particular strategic or political ends. They are not neutral descriptors but rather vehicles through which policy preferences are legitimized and elevated. Secondly, the label of ‘doctrine’ carries performative power. It sends signals within the machinery of government—particularly to courts and foreign policy bureaucracies—about presidential priorities, and in doing so, invites corresponding alignment in action. Invoking, and enforcing, a doctrine can sharpen internal policy coherence by aligning actors around what they perceive to be the president’s articulated worldview. Thirdly, the internal utility of a doctrine extends beyond bureaucratic coordination: within administrations, doctrines help clarify presidential intent, providing a framework through which subordinates interpret the values and directions they are expected to operationalize. This communicative function also extends outward. This is because, as Nixon did and George W. Bush would do, administrations may explicitly adopt doctrinal labels to distinguish themselves from predecessors, using the term to signal a rupture with prior strategies and to articulate a new vision.

In the media sphere, doctrines are not only reported but often actively constructed by journalists and commentators seeking to brand presidencies in ways that align with their own ideological preferences or policy agendas. These actors use the term strategically to either encourage continuity in a direction they favour or to hold presidents to perceived commitments. Thus, doctrines are not fixed descriptors but dynamic political tools. Rather, they are fluid in meaning, strategically deployed, and deeply embedded in the processes by which policy is communicated, legitimized, and contested. The following four chapters will show that each president from Reagan to George W. Bush were each confronted with the prospect of declaring their own doctrine. Their doing, or not doing so, depended on the

circumstances which they confronted, their approach to communication, and the people they had around them.

## Chapter 2

### **The Reagan Doctrine and the Legitimation of Roll Back**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will explore how the rhetorical use of the Reagan doctrine facilitated and undermined the legitimation of Ronald Reagan's foreign policy choices throughout his presidency from 1981 to 1989. By this, we mean how the varying definitional interpretations of varying Reagan doctrines, propagated by agents in media and politics, were serving to rationalize and scrutinize Reagan's actions – particularly vis a vis supporting anti-communist rebels in Central America. Jeffrey Michaels noted 'the actions taken since the start of the Reagan administration demonstrates that this operative doctrine had been in effect for years, even if it wasn't actually referred to as a "doctrine" until 1985.'<sup>1</sup> In showing this latter statement to be incorrect, this chapter is concerned with understanding how the media's reporting, as well as the broader editorial and political commentary, about Reagan's foreign policy leadership from the 1980 election onwards was praised and attacked through contests to politically define a Reagan doctrine.<sup>2</sup> The chapter will argue that during the 1980s, the Reagan doctrine did not solely codify a set of principles and policy practices directed to spreading democracy by rolling back communist revolutions through material support of armed rebel groups. Rather, it served as a centrally contested politicized label during the 1980s over which critics and supporters of the president rhetorically utilized and battled to

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey E. Michaels, 'Dysfunctional Doctrines? Eisenhower, Carter and U.S. Military Intervention in the Middle East,' *Political Science Quarterly* 126:3 (2011), 465-492 (p. 467).

<sup>2</sup> Chester Pach, "The Reagan Doctrine: Principle, Pragmatism, and Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (2006), 75-88 (p. 75). Pach wrote that, 'The Reagan Doctrine was discovered rather than proclaimed. After Reagan's 1985 State of the Union, Charles Krauthammer 'declared that he had found a grand statement of foreign policy hiding in plain sight.'

define in their own terms, with positive and negative consequences for the perceived legitimacy of Reagan's choices.

This chapter will be organized into three sections. The first section will explore when, and within what contexts, the Reagan doctrine was first being discussed during the 1980 presidential election to scrutinize Reagan's political identity and his prospective foreign policy leadership. The second section shall trace how the Reagan doctrine became a politically and rhetorically contested concept during the first term over which actors in the polity used in their attempts to impose a definitional interpretation about what Reagan's Cold War foreign policy stood for. The third section will trace how the 'Reagan doctrine' label was contested during Reagan's second term during which the doctrine became much more politically charged than it had been during the first term; particularly during the Iran-Contra scandal.

### **The Reagan Doctrine During the 1980 Presidential Election**

Reagan was laying the groundwork for a successful presidential run throughout the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>3</sup> During the period from 1975-1979, he ran a daily radio commentary for which he gave '1,027 of these addresses to an audience of 20 to 30 million listeners each week, interrupted only by his initial run for the White House in 1976.'<sup>4</sup> Reagan's media adviser, Michael Deaver, once told the *Los Angeles Times* that, 'In my opinion, Ronald Reagan got elected because he was on the radio every day for nearly five years talking to 50 million people a week.'<sup>5</sup> During these addresses, and in his own writings from 1975-1979, Reagan

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<sup>3</sup> Ronald Reagan, 'A Time For Choosing, October 27, 1964' *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/reagans/ronald-reagan/time-choosing-speech-october-27-1964>.

<sup>4</sup> Joe Foote & Kevin Curran, 'Ronald Reagan Radio Broadcasts (1976-1979),' *The Library of Congress* - <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/ReaganOnRadio.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Foote & Curran, 'Ronald Reagan Radio Broadcasts (1976-1979).'

criticized Richard Nixon's détente for having been taken strategic advantage of by the Soviets and stated that the main goal of the United States' Cold War policy 'should be to hasten the end of communism. Communism will not survive, he writes, because it lays the groundwork for its own destruction.'<sup>6</sup> The conservative insurgency taking hold throughout the 1970s, within which Reagan played a formative role, rejected many of the liberal domestic reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, but also what it characterized as a weak and morally misguided foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> Nixon's foreign policy strategy of co-option, based on integrating the Soviet Union into a legitimate international order in which it would behave according to notions of restraint by co-opting China into a system of triangular diplomacy, and burden sharing with regional allies that would act as America's proxies to bear the burden of containment, had degenerated by 1981.<sup>8</sup> Reagan's foreign policy would not engage in collaborative arrangements with the adversary but 'in the restoration of American military power and the resurgence of American will.'<sup>9</sup>

Jeanne Kirkpatrick, who later became Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, wrote an influential article – in 1979 – lambasting the Carter administration's foreign policy which, she claimed, had diminished American global influence.<sup>10</sup> Kirkpatrick's article, *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, charged Carter as having overseen a build-up of the Soviet military which was matched by an extension of Soviet influence in the third world whilst America's forces stagnated and its influence declined.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in 1980, the

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<sup>6</sup> Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson & Martin Anderson, *Reagan in His Own Hand* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Lou Cannon, 'Reagan's Foreign Policy: Scrap "Weakness, Illusion," Stress Military Strength,' *The Washington Post* (February 16, 1980) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/02/16/reagans-foreign-policy-scrap-weakness-illusion-stress-military-strength/f95da6f5-62b9-4b52-b320-8e5ac0e08d4f/>; Andrew Rudalevige. *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power after Watergate*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Phil Williams, 'The Limits of American Power: From Nixon to Reagan,' *International Affairs* 63:4 (1987), 575-587 (p. 579).

<sup>9</sup> Williams, p. 579.

<sup>10</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, 'Dictatorships and Double Standards,' *Commentary* (November 1979) - <https://www.commentary.org/articles/jeane-kirkpatrick/dictatorships-double-standards/>

<sup>11</sup> Kirkpatrick, 'Dictatorships and Double Standards.'

Council for Inter-American Security published *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties* which blamed Carter's foreign policy for these crises and advocated for an anti-communist foreign policy that went on the offensive.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the election period, Carter was charged by conservatives as overseeing a period of national malaise during which America became gripped by a fear of not becoming militarily involved in places where it potentially should due to the memory of Vietnam, and a weak presidency as manifested in Carter's inability to effectively resolve crises such as the Iranian hostage situation.<sup>13</sup> Henry Nau, a senior staffer on Reagan's National Security Council from January 1981 to July 1983, told the author in an interview for this study that 'Carter had a problem of not knowing where he wanted to go and got mugged by reality when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Then he increased the defense budget. And by the way, only by 5%. Reagan did it by 40%.'<sup>14</sup> Those in the Reagan camp, therefore, wanted to adopt a much tougher stance against the Soviet Union than had been taken throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>15</sup> Throughout 1980, newspapers began discerning a more offensive doctrine within certain statements Reagan was making regarding the necessity to reassert American power because, in 1980, it appeared the Soviet Union was on the move and the United States was in retreat.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Committee of Santa Fe, 'A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties,' *Council for Inter-American Security* (Washington D.C., 1980); Bernard Weinraub, 'Reagan Acknowledges Carter's Military Build-Up,' *The New York Times* (April 6, 1986) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/06/us/reagan-acknowledges-carter-s-military-buildup.html>. However, Reagan later acknowledged that certain initiatives which he embarked upon, such as a strong defense build-up, had precedents; some of which were, in fact, began under Carter.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Geyelin, 'Flailing About Foreign Policy,' *The Washington Post* (September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1980) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/09/11/flailing-about-foreign-policy/cd9f5075-94c2-4518-bf3e-e1ea95a257de/>

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023. Nau stated to the author that Reagan was laying out his ambition to win the Cold War in the 1970s.

<sup>16</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 349; Bill Gold, 'Last Minute Notes on the 1980 Election,' *The Washington Post* (November 4, 1980) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1980/11/04/last-minute-notes-on-the-1980-election/4133a115-53f0-4b63-9475-7722682a1963/>. 'Would Carter do better during a second term,' the columnist wondered, 'when he would be free of the need to make politically safe decisions? Or is it necessary to bring in Reagan to restore confidence and hasten remedial action?'

In early February 1980, a column in *The Bismarck Tribune* suggested that Reagan ‘outlined a Reagan Doctrine for dealing with the Soviet Union that is based on sending strong signals to the Soviet Union, including a blockade of Cuba.’<sup>17</sup> The same column, written by the *Associated Press*’ Donald Rothberg, was published in other newspapers throughout the United States.<sup>18</sup> In October 1980, another columnist wrote in *The Record* that if ‘we are left to wonder just exactly what the Carter doctrine is, nobody has much doubt about what the Reagan doctrine would be. Though vague on specifics...he is clear in his determination to beef up the nation’s military might.’<sup>19</sup> Already at this early juncture, and five years before it was considered to have been coined, the notion of a Reagan doctrine was already operational within American political discourse.

It was already being defined in such a way that aligned with Reagan’s narrative asserting a need to be more confrontational in the Cold War, including through building up the military. Thus, potentially reflecting an early assessment of Reagan’s communicatory skills since the terms upon which he was basing his leadership was being acknowledged by the press. Thereby standing in contrast to Carter’s inability to control the terms in which his leadership in the Cold War was understood.<sup>20</sup> These pieces also suggest that the press anticipated, based on Reagan’s rhetoric, that the importance of American military power in the Cold War was to become a cornerstone of Reagan’s Cold War foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> Though the campaign rhetoric did not outline fully what the reassertion of American power would

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<sup>17</sup> Donald. M. Rothberg, ‘Strong Signals to Soviets Part of Reagan Doctrine,’ *The Bismarck Tribune* (February 1, 1980), p. 2 - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/346022664/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>18</sup> Donald. M. Rothberg, “‘Reagan Doctrine’ Advocates American Presence in Pakistan,” *The Ithaca Journal* (February 1, 1980), p. 2. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/255152384/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>; Donald. M. Rothberg, ‘Reagan Outlines “Reagan Doctrine,”’ *Reno Gazette-Journal* (February 1, 1980), p. 11. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/147487048/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>19</sup> Robert Comstock et al, ‘Lots of Choices, But Little To Choose From: An Editorial,’ *The Record* (October 15, 1980), p. 64. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/493445071/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Strong, ‘Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16:4 (1986), pp. 636-650.

<sup>21</sup> Gaddis, p. 349.

operationally imply, Reagan repudiated the premise that the U.S. should only act defensively, within the framework of containment, against an adversary on the offensive in favour of 'raising the prospect of regaining and indefinitely sustaining American pre-eminence.'<sup>22</sup>

During the 1980 presidential debate, Reagan criticized Carter for cutting military spending and being acquiescent in the face of Soviet aggression in Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Reagan was asked what the differences between the candidates were on the uses of American military power to which Reagan responded saying he did not know what the differences might be 'because I don't know what Mr. Carter's policies are.'<sup>24</sup> Two months prior, Reagan gave his 'Restoring the Margin of Safety' speech on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1980, during which he declared that America had been sleepwalking under the Carter administration which had allowed the margin of safety to evaporate because, he claimed, the Soviets 'are outspending us in the military field by 50 percent and more than double, sometimes triple, on their strategic forces.'<sup>25</sup> Reagan lamented the Soviet, Cuban and East German presences in Ethiopia, South Yemen, and the subjugation of Afghanistan which brought the Soviets 'within striking distance of the oil-rich Arabian Gulf.'<sup>26</sup> 'All over the world,' Reagan declared, 'we can see that in the face of declining American power, the Soviets and their friends are advancing. Yet the Carter Administration seems totally oblivious.'<sup>27</sup>

To domestic and international observers, it was clear that a Reagan foreign policy was not going to accept what it argued was the trend of American decline in the Cold War. The way in which Reagan conferred greater legitimacy upon his candidacy, regarding his views on foreign policy, was by continuously defining his opponent as having jeopardized

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<sup>22</sup> Gaddis, p. 351.

<sup>23</sup> The Ronald Reagan Foundation, '1980 Presidential Candidate Debate: Governor Ronald Reagan and President Jimmy Carter – 10/28/80.' - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_8YxFc\\_1b\\_0&t=320s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8YxFc_1b_0&t=320s).

<sup>24</sup> 1980 Presidential Candidate Debate - occurs at 2:46 minutes.

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Reagan, 'Peace: Restoring the Margin of Safety,' August 18, 1980, *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/peace-restoring-margin-safety>

<sup>26</sup> Reagan, 'Peace: Restoring the Margin of Safety.'

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

American national security. Carter's eventual loss by significant margins to a candidate who had dialed up the rhetoric against the Soviet Union did not go unnoticed by the Soviet government. On November 7, 1980, a telegram was received in the Department of State, from the United States embassy in the Soviet Union, outlining that Soviet officials were closely watching the behaviour of personalities who would be assuming power after Reagan's recent election victory.<sup>28</sup> The Soviets had now become alarmed that the incoming administration intended on being more confrontational than had Carter's, and the two preceding Republican administrations of the 1970s.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Reagan Doctrine and the Legitimation of Policy Choices: 1981-1985**

Before coming into office, all presidents provide statements about their priorities in foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> Nau told the author that Reagan rationalized the Cold War as a major conflict in world affairs between good and evil.<sup>31</sup> Phil Williams posited that Reagan arrived in the White House with a simplistic set of assumptions about the world and America's place in it, and his foreign and defense policies were 'designed to restore American power and pre-eminence in the international system.'<sup>32</sup> His foreign policy represented 'an attempt to overcome the limits of American power largely by ignoring them.'<sup>33</sup> Within his first three years in office, Reagan issued five national security decision directives aimed at institutionalizing certain policy

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<sup>28</sup> Document 1. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, Moscow, November 7, 1980, 1217Z, 17743. Subject: (C) Initial Moscow Views on the U.S. Election. Ref: Moscow 17719 (NOTAL). *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981-January 1983*, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Document 5. Memorandum From Secretary of State Haig to President Reagan. Washington, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1981. Subject: Analysis of the 1962 US-USSR Understanding on Cuba. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981-January 1983*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> For a study into the influence of the president's leadership style on agenda setting, see: Margaret G. Hermann & Thomas Preston, 'Presidents, Advisers, and Foreign Policy: The Effect of Leadership Style on Executive Arrangements,' *Political Psychology* 15:1 (1994), pp. 75-96.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Williams, p. 575.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575.

initiatives, such as funding anti-communist insurgents and increasing the military budget.<sup>34</sup>

During an interview for this study, Nau stated that these directives were expressions of Reagan's grand strategy to confront the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> These directives were signed by the president to 'promulgate presidential decisions implementing national policy and objectives in all areas involving national security.'<sup>36</sup>

In mid-April 1981, Joseph Harsch reported on Reagan's early pledges to increase military spending, to adopt more offensive measures in areas once considered on the periphery of the Cold War, and wrote that, 'The doctrine of the implacable Soviet menace is as essential to the Reagan program as was its reverse to the Nixon program. In Nixon doctrine the Soviet Union is manageable. In Reagan doctrine it must be overpowered.'<sup>37</sup> Already by mid-1981, the few propagated definitions of a Reagan doctrine located where the administration's priority laid: to seek geostrategic superiority over what it considered to be its evil rival.<sup>38</sup> During the first term, however, broader perceptions about the Reagan doctrine's development were informed by disagreements over how policy initiatives were decided, and the way in which the administration articulated those initiatives. Thereby contributing to a

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<sup>34</sup> The White House. *National Security Decision Directive Number 17*. (Washington D.C., January 4, 1982) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-17.pdf>; The White House. *National Security Decision Directive Number 32*. (Washington D.C., May 20, 1982) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-32.pdf>; The White House. *National Security Decision Directive Number 75*. (Washington D.C., January 17, 1983) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf>; The White House. *National Security Decision Directive Number 77*. (Washington, January 14, 1983) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-077.htm>; The White House. *National Security Decision Directive Number 110*. (Washington D.C., October 21, 1983) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/23-2169t.gif>

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> National Security Council, National Security Decision Directive 1, February 25, 1981, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: National Security Decision Directives, Box 91310, *The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library*.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph C. Harsch, 'Reagan vs. Nixon,' *The Christian Science Monitor* (April 14, 1981) - <https://www.csmonitor.com/1981/0414/041425.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, 'Reagan Must Seize the Middle Ground,' *The Los Angeles Times* (November 18, 1984), p. 85. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/390299705/?match=1&terms=Reagan%20must%20seize%20the%20middle%20ground>. Kissing later scorned the idea America should achieve superiority in the Cold War when he wrote that there are no 'final happy endings... Whatever they may agree on, the United States and the Soviet Union will remain superpowers impinging globally on each other. Ideological hostility will continue. Specific, precise arrangements can, indeed must be made. But they are more likely to ameliorate tensions than to end them.'

vibrant national debate about how questions of presidential rhetoric and leadership style played into the substance of American foreign policymaking.

### Identifying a Reagan Doctrine: 1981 – 1983

An undated draft study prepared by the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, held within a repository of documents dated between January and March 1981, asked: 'How can we exploit Soviet belief that they will be able "to do business" with tougher but more consistent U.S. Administration? How do questions of style and rhetoric play into substance of our relations?'<sup>39</sup> The document advised Reagan to discuss how the U.S. could counter the influence of Moscow and its client regimes and 'exploit their vulnerabilities...Identify possible U.S. surrogates with which we can cooperate in Third Countries.'<sup>40</sup> Reagan, during a Lincoln Day dinner speech in February 1980, had declared that the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) 'should be allowed to pursue covert activities without congressional restraints' and that 'restrictions requiring the C.I.A. to report any and all covert actions to eight congressional committees must be eliminated.'<sup>41</sup> As early as March 9, 1981, Reagan wrote in his diary that he had 'approved some covert operations. I believe we are getting back on track with a proper approach to "intelligence" under Bill Casey.'<sup>42</sup> William Casey, appointed head of the C.I.A. by Reagan in 1981, had asked the president – in mid-February 1981 – 'for a radical restructuring of the covert operations consultation process.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Attachment: Draft Study Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff. Washington, undated. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981–1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981–January 1983*, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Attachment: Draft Study Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Cannon, 'Reagan's Foreign Policy.'

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Reagan & Douglas Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: Harper, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. (New York: Grove Press, 1996), p. 19; Kyle Longley, Jeremy D. Mayer, Michael Schaller, & Joan W. Sloan, *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President*. (New York: Routledge, 2007). p. 21. These scholars see the Reagan doctrine's formation as being highly influenced by Bill Casey's idea of arming anti-communist insurgents around the world so as to overextend the Soviet Union.

Peter Schweizer, in his triumphalist account of Reagan's Cold War leadership, outlined how – traditionally – the consultation process included officials from various departments who would meet to review ongoing and proposed covert operations.<sup>44</sup> These included people from the Department of Defense, lower-level members of the cabinet, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and assistant secretaries of state whereas Casey proposed that the National Security Planning Group alone review executive branch operations.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, during the earliest days of the Reagan administration, Casey was proposing policies that amounted to economic warfare against the Soviet Union by getting it involved in many Afghanistan-type situations to create fissures within the wider system. Schweizer writes that, 'What Casey was suggesting later became known as the Reagan Doctrine, an effort to finance and support anti-communist insurgencies around the world.'<sup>46</sup> The Reagan administration had now set America on the offensive in the Cold War.<sup>47</sup>

On May 8, 1981, Reagan addressed the University of Notre Dame and pronounced that, 'The West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.'<sup>48</sup> Despite such lofty rhetoric, how Reagan would translate this into effective policy development was unclear. In early July 1981, Philip Geyelin in the *Star Tribune* reported that, 'Suddenly it's all the rage to pound on the doors of the Reagan

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<sup>44</sup> Schweizer, p. 19.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Attachment: Letter From Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev to President Reagan. Moscow, May 25, 1981. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981–1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981–January 1983*, p. 157. 'Try, Mr. President,' Brezhnev wrote to Reagan, 'to see what is going on through our eyes. Attempts are being made to revitalize the U.S.A-made military and political alliances, new bases are being added to those which already exist thousands of kilometres away from the U.S.A. and aimed against our country.'

<sup>48</sup> For transcript, see: Ronald Reagan, 'Address at Commencement Exercise at the University of Notre Dame, May 17, 1981,' *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-commencement-exercises-university-notre-dame>; 'President Reagan's First Press Conference in Room 450 of the OEOB, January 29, 1981,' *Reagan Library* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xj5UgwwYWd4>. During his first press conference, Reagan said that détente had been a one-way street which the Soviet Union had abused for its own purposes.

administration, demanding a foreign policy. A “major foreign-policy speech” would help, or even, God save us, a Reagan Doctrine.’<sup>49</sup> However, Geyelin warned, ‘a speech (and still less a doctrine) is no substitute for a decision-making procedure that brings the free-wheelers and the power-strugglers forcefully into line with the president’s purposes.’<sup>50</sup> Once that was done, Geyelin posited, a foreign policy will emerge ‘by a sort of extrusion process, in which the hot metal of competing plans and proposals is forced by political, bureaucratic – and above all, presidential – pressure through the die of crises and conditions around the world.’<sup>51</sup>

Five days later, on July 10, 1981, American diplomat Don Nuechterlein published a letter to Secretary of State Al Haig in which the former advised the administration that despite recent criticism ‘for not laying out a broad strategic plan in foreign policy,’ a doctrine was unnecessary.<sup>52</sup> This is because, Nuechterlein wrote, enunciating a doctrine would be a trap and that, ‘Past presidential doctrines have been more confusing to the American public than the more conventional ways of explaining foreign policy.’<sup>53</sup> ‘The conclusion is,’ he wrote, ‘that full-blown presidential doctrines on foreign policy have more often got the United States into trouble than they have clarified enduring U.S. national interests’ because, Nuechterlein argued, once it is enunciated, it becomes a commitment to action when circumstances can make that action untenable.<sup>54</sup> These two pieces highlight two critical themes salient in the discourse of doctrines.

Firstly, both the journalist and the diplomat were aware of the potential consequences that declaring a specific principle or initiative as the Reagan doctrine may have had. Both suggested not doing so. Avoiding the public framing of the Reagan administration’s policies

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<sup>49</sup> Philip Geyelin, ‘Creating a Foreign Policy,’ *Star Tribune* (July 5, 1981), p. 10. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/187757771/?terms=Philip%20Geyelin%20foreign%20policy%3A%20the%20views&match=1>

<sup>50</sup> Geyelin, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Don Nuechterlein, ‘A Letter to Al Haig,’ *The Roanoke Times* (July 10, 1981), p. 6. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/917044481/?terms=Reagan%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>53</sup> Nuechterlein, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

as a doctrine, Nuechterlein was suggesting, was one way to safeguard it from charges of inconsistency in action. Further reinforcing how the endorsement of a doctrine can undermine the legitimization of policy choices when agents identify inconsistencies in its execution; for instance, why the administration had chosen to support certain anti-communist rebel group supposedly fighting for a democratic state and neglected to support the promotion of democracy in other countries led by right-wing authoritarian rulers.<sup>55</sup> Nuechterlein observed that Reagan's foreign policy had been articulated in speeches and statements and 'those who don't like what they see will not be persuaded by having it proclaimed as a doctrine.'<sup>56</sup> Nuechterlein recognized the susceptibility of doctrines to become politicized in the discourse and, if officially endorsed by the administration, potentially too rigid for the administration to justify necessary shifts in policy which ostensibly contradicted the doctrine's initially stated purpose. Therefore, he proposed the administration continue 'to pursue the policies you set out...and not be pressured into recommending that the president make a speech on global strategy.'<sup>57</sup>

Secondly, Geyelin's piece in particular touched upon how Reagan needed to pay more attention to the decision-making procedure since internal bureaucratic politics were hindering Reagan from asserting himself and his ideas in the policy development process.<sup>58</sup> Early on in the Reagan administration, divisions emerged between certain personalities, or the 'freewheelers' as Geyelin had called them, over how and where American resources and

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<sup>55</sup> Document 15. 'Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting,' Washington, February 6, 1981, 1:30-2:40pm. Subject: Caribbean Basin; Poland. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981-January 1983. The Reagan Library, Deal Files, Chron February 1981. Secret; Sensitive*, p. 39. During a meeting with the N.S.C., Reagan demanded that, 'We must change the attitude of our diplomatic corps so that we don't bring down governments in the name of human rights. None of them is as guilty of human rights violations as are Cuba and the U.S.S.R. We don't throw out our friends just because they can't pass the "saliva test" on human rights. I want to see that stopped. We need people who recognize that philosophy.'

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> For a study into the role of domestic political pressures on the development of Reagan's grand strategy, see: Thomas Robb & James Cooper, 'In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan's First Term, 1981-5,' *The International History Review* 45:6 (2023), 957-979.

power should be directed.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, to endorse a presidential doctrine would have been a conceit when Reagan did not have his administration in order. During the first six years, each national security adviser proved unable to bring order to the unruly policy process.<sup>60</sup> However, another interpretation of these divisions was conveyed to the author by Henry Nau:

He knows where he wants to go, but his management style from the very beginning, even as governor, was very light on his subordinates. Although he did ensure that he always had division among his subordinates – that I think is an important point to test against the evidence – he always wanted people arguing different points of view so then he could take from one, and the other, as he wished and as he needed.<sup>61</sup>

Over the course of Reagan's presidency, there were five national security advisers. Unlike Nixon and Carter, Reagan downgraded the position.<sup>62</sup> The postholder would return to simply coordinating the policy process, which Reagan did not have much interest in, but the secretary of state would be the principal spokesman and adviser to the president on foreign affairs.<sup>63</sup> Generally, State leaned towards prioritizing diplomacy and multilateralism whereas the National Security Council preferred more assertive and unilateral stances concerning matters of arms control and the policies toward Latin America.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ivo H. Daalder & I. M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p. 134. Secretary of State Haig often found himself in conflict with the first-term's infamous 'Troika': Mike Deaver (Deputy Chief of Staff), Jim Baker (Chief of Staff), and Edwin Meese (Presidential Counsellor). The Troika managed the White House with effectiveness during the first term and knew Reagan's policy preferences.

<sup>60</sup> Regan, *For the Record*. Reagan's Secretary of the Treasury, and later his Chief of Staff, would blame Reagan's passivity in overseeing his National Security Council for causing the scandal.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Daalder & Destler, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> Daalder & Destler, p. 128.

<sup>64</sup> James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New Jersey: Penguin, 2010), p. 48.

Debates about Reagan's management style notwithstanding, on January 2, 1982, Reagan issued *National Security Decision Directive-17* which stated that the U.S. was to defeat the insurgency in El Salvador and to oppose Cuba, Nicaragua, and others seeking to introduce into Central America 'troops from outside the region, trained subversives, or arms and military supplies for insurgents.'<sup>65</sup> As early as 1981, Reagan thought that Central America was targeted for a communist takeover and that Nicaragua was one of the top ranking items on Reagan's foreign policy agenda.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Reagan 'rated the issue as a severe security threat and as a result wanted the U.S. to take action. The president may have been unwilling to intervene directly, and he was certainly aware that public opinion would not support such a policy.'<sup>67</sup> Thus, the decision to intervene covertly was chosen. Choosing covert action, combined with a hands-off approach to the policy planning process and a first year that was heavily focused on an economic agenda, led to further demands for an all-encompassing statement of grand strategic purpose to be made by the president.

Despite Reagan being remembered as the great communicator, by 1982 he was seen as adrift on foreign policy.<sup>68</sup> In April 1982, the approval rating for Reagan's foreign policy leadership stood at forty-five percent.<sup>69</sup> The managing editor of the Gallup Poll stated to *The New York Times* that, 'Unlike our experience with past Presidents, public opinion about Mr. Reagan seems so polarized that changes in foreign affairs have little effect on the public view of his overall competence as President.'<sup>70</sup> Beginning in 1982, therefore, Robert Kagan, who served as a speechwriter for the new Secretary of State George Shultz, wrote that it was then

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<sup>65</sup> The White House, *National Security Decision Directive Number 17*. (Washington D.C., January 4, 1982) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-17.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> James Bilsland, *The President, the State, and the Cold War: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Presidents Truman and Reagan* (Glasgow: Routledge, 2013), p. 209.

<sup>67</sup> Bilsland, p. 209.

<sup>68</sup> Lee Edwards, 'What Made Reagan a Truly Great Communicator,' *The Heritage Foundation* (February 5, 2018) - <https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/what-made-reagan-truly-great-communicator>

<sup>69</sup> *The New York Times*, 'Approval Rating for Reagan is Lowest Ever in Gallup Poll,' (August 19, 1982) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/19/us/approval-rating-for-reagan-is-lowest-ever-in-gallup-poll.html>

<sup>70</sup> *The New York Times*, 'Approval Rating for Reagan is Lowest Ever in Gallup Poll.'

when Reagan started to seriously concentrate on foreign affairs (after the first year during which the administration had concentrated mostly on economic policy) during which new ‘philosophies were promulgated, new rhetoric employed, and the “war of ideas” was fought on matters of foreign policy with new vigour.’<sup>71</sup>

Nonetheless, writing for *The Washington Post* on April 5, 1982, Philip Geyelin reported that ‘the Reagan administration is thinking seriously about having a foreign policy.’<sup>72</sup> Further, Geyelin cynically suggested, the administration could call it a grand strategy, conceptual framework, or a world view, but in reality it comes down to an effort to pull together all the loose strands of concerns and purposes in strategically important regions and alliances such as in Central America, eastern Europe, and the Third World.<sup>73</sup> Externally, the administration needed to give these purposes a ‘coherent and comprehensive public expression to what it is the United States thinks it is up to (and up against) in the world. Both steps are now being taken – hesitantly.’<sup>74</sup>

Reagan, however, had – at least in the first year – ‘publicly resisted the notion that the test of a foreign policy is having one that can be fitted into a single, all-encompassing address.’<sup>75</sup> The perceived waning of Reagan’s leadership legitimacy on the foreign policy front therefore required such addresses.<sup>76</sup> On June 8, 1982, during his visit to the United Kingdom, Reagan gave a speech to the Palace of Westminster, during which he warned that, ‘Democracy’s enemies have refined their instruments of repression...What, then, is our

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1977-1990* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 208.

<sup>72</sup> Philip Geyelin, ‘It’s Time to Communicate a Foreign Policy,’ *The Washington Post* (April 5, 1982) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/04/06/its-time-to-communicate-a-foreign-policy/fb2347fc-2bba-41de-800a-5c22b8a9d91d/>

<sup>73</sup> Geyelin, ‘It’s Time to Communicate a Foreign Policy.’

<sup>74</sup> Geyelin

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Secretary of State Alexander Haig ‘recently rejected as “nonsense” the inference that the administration “lacks a coherent strategic design.” Haig had no answer when pressed as to when the president will make a speech telling us what it is.’

<sup>76</sup> Hedrick Smith, ‘Allen Quits Security Post; Reagan Hails His “Integrity”; Haig’s Deputy is Successor; News Analysis,’ *The New York Times* (January 5, 1982) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/05/us/allen-quits-security-post-reagan-hails-his-integrity-haig-s-deputy-successor.html>

course? Must civilization perish in a hail of fiery atoms? Must freedom wither in a quiet deadening accommodation with totalitarian evil?’<sup>77</sup> Reagan later described the speech as ‘probably one of the most important speeches I gave as president.’<sup>78</sup> Reagan wrote that what eventually flowed from the speech ‘became known as the Reagan Doctrine, which was our often controversial policy of supporting those fighting for freedom and against communism wherever we found them.’<sup>79</sup> Margaret Thatcher wrote that the ‘speech itself was a remarkable one...In his speech President Reagan proposed a worldwide campaign for democracy...It was the manifesto of the Reagan doctrine.’<sup>80</sup>

The Palace of Westminster speech also reflected Reagan’s good impulses, which *The New York Times* reporter Philip Taubman told the author in an interview was a hallmark of Reagan’s leadership; one of those impulses was to throw the Kremlin on the defensive through belligerent rhetoric.<sup>81</sup> In this way, another important foreign policy speech was that made to the National Association of Evangelicals on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1983, during which Reagan described the Soviet Union as an ‘evil empire.’<sup>82</sup> Aram Bakashian, a speechwriter for Reagan who worked on the evil empire speech, claimed that the phrase ‘evil empire’ paled by comparison to characterizations made by Soviet leaders when referring to the United States.<sup>83</sup> Anthony Dolan, the author of the evil empire speech, later stated in an interview that if one reads the Westminster, evil empire, and the Heritage Foundation speeches (the latter given in October 1983) as a continuum ‘you will see the evolution of a counter-strategy to the Soviets

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<sup>77</sup> ‘President Reagan’s Address to British Parliament, June 8, 1982.’ *Reagan Library* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gm35tFTsuc&t=1318s>

<sup>78</sup> Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (Simon & Schuster: London, 1989), p. 107.

<sup>79</sup> Reagan, pp. 107-108.

<sup>80</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Autobiography* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 258.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023.

<sup>82</sup> Ronald Reagan, ‘Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida. March 8, 1983,’ *The American Presidency Project* - <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-annual-convention-the-national-association-evangelicals-orlando-florida>

<sup>83</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘Ronald Reagan Oral History Project: Final Edited Transcript Interview with Aram Bakashian. Monday, January 14, 2002, Washington D.C., with Stephen F. Knott & Russell Riley, p. 48. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/aram-bakashian-jr-oral-history>

does two things.’<sup>84</sup> Firstly, tough rhetoric established a dual strategy, ‘a paradoxical strategy,’ of candour and reconciliation and offered diplomatic engagement.<sup>85</sup> But, Dolan argued, it did something else: ‘It rejected containment. It said the Soviet Union is about to collapse and we’re *gonna* push it. That’s all it ever really needed. And we’re not going to stay on our side of the fifty-yard line anymore. Later this would be elaborated with things like the Reagan Doctrine.’<sup>86</sup>

### The Evolving Reagan Doctrine and the Power of Labels in Shaping Cold War Initiatives

National security reporter for *The New York Times*, Philip Taubman, wrote a piece on July 31, 1983 titled ‘The Reagan Doctrine’ throughout which he discussed the administration’s plans to escalate America’s military presence and covert operations in Central America.<sup>87</sup> However, the Boland Amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act of 1983 restricted U.S. spending in Nicaragua and proclaimed that no funds provided in the act may be used to furnish military equipment or other support for military activities ‘to any group or individual, not part of a country’s armed forces, for the purposes of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua.’<sup>88</sup> Taubman’s piece was part of a series of front page stories he wrote in July 1983

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<sup>84</sup> Martin J. Medhurst & Tony Dolan, ‘Writing Speeches for Ronald Reagan: An Interview with Tony Dolan,’ *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2:1 (1998), 245-256 (p. 247); Ronald Reagan, ‘Remarks at a Dinner Marking the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Heritage Foundation. October 3, 1983,’ *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-dinner-marking-10th-anniversary-heritage-foundation>

<sup>85</sup> Medhurst & Dolan, p. 247; Document 73. Telegram From the Department of the Embassy in the Soviet Union. Subject: Secretary’s Letter to Gromyko on UNGA Bilateral. Washington, July 11, 1981. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981-1983. Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D810339-0244*, p. 219. The telegram read that as Reagan and Brezhnev want to establish a constructive relationship, there ‘is much we can and must do together to build a more peaceful world. Accepting that we will continue to compete, we also must recognize that unrestrained competition could lead to catastrophe.’

<sup>86</sup> Medhurst & Dolan, p. 247.

<sup>87</sup> Philip Taubman, ‘The Reagan Doctrine,’ *The New York Times* (July 31, 1983) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/31/weekinreview/the-reagan-doctrine.html>

<sup>88</sup> U.S. Congress, *H.R. 2760 – A Bill to Amend the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1983 to prohibit United States support for military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua and to authorize assistance* (Washington D.C., May 1983) -

disclosing a series of secret decisions Reagan had made to escalate policy in Central America.<sup>89</sup> Taubman claimed in an interview with the author that these stories he published in *The New York Times* had ‘rocked Washington’ due to the sensitivity of the Central American issue given Congress’ prohibition of funds to certain groups there, as well as certain members of Congress having high-access information regarding the intentions of the Reagan administration in that region.<sup>90</sup>

During an interview for this study, Taubman claimed his sources were sensitive as it was someone in the Office of Management and Budget, within the national security division, who knew what was going on because they saw the budget numbers moving through the Office which, in turn, needed to be put to the appropriations committee; yet, they handed Taubman the secret documents.<sup>91</sup> In his ‘Reagan Doctrine’ piece, Taubman wrote that ‘Congress was having trouble dealing with Mr. Reagan’s plans to escalate the American presence and not-so-covert operations in Central America.’<sup>92</sup> The House voted to cut off American secret aid to rebels in Nicaragua and ‘was an unmistakable expression of opposition to one aspect of Mr. Reagan’s policy, namely the financing and arming of 10,000 insurgents in Nicaragua.’<sup>93</sup>

The practical effect of the vote was, Taubman wrote, uncertain since administration officials dismissed the House action as partisan politics and it would not ‘affect plans to continue and increase support for the insurgents.’<sup>94</sup> Reagan had ‘the controlling hand over American foreign policy’ and unless ‘his opponents can somehow galvanize their force,

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[https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding\\_the\\_Iran\\_Contra\\_Affair/documents/d-nic-12.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/documents/d-nic-12.pdf); Byrne, *Iran-Contra*.

<sup>89</sup> Philip Taubman, ‘U.S. Said To Plan Military Exercises in Latin America,’ *The New York Times* (July 19, 1983) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/19/world/us-said-to-plan-military-exercises-in-latin-america.html>; Philip Taubman, ‘Reagan Plans Rise In Military Moves in Latin America,’ *The New York Times* (July 23, 1983) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/23/world/reagan-plans-rise-in-military-moves-in-latin-america.html>

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023.

<sup>92</sup> Taubman, ‘The Reagan Doctrine.’

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Congress may modify aspects of the Reagan approach but cannot take decisive action to change it.’<sup>95</sup> Despite this, Taubman observed, Congress ‘cannot be written off as a force in the Central America debate. In some ways, a divided Congress can become a drag on policy if legislation, particularly budget bills, get bogged down in bickering.’<sup>96</sup>

The fact that these initiatives, such as providing military aid to rebel groups, were being framed as a Reagan doctrine being unilaterally pursued by the administration reflected a broader understanding that the administration was politically repudiating status-quo thinking about how to deal with global communism.<sup>97</sup> If the status quo in foreign policy from Nixon to Carter implied an emphasis on easing tensions (even though Carter developed a more muscular policy after 1979) and/or a focus on human rights at the expense of strategic considerations, then these former considerations had to be lower in priority in favour of the latter.<sup>98</sup> However, Scott argued that quite apart from a universal doctrine, the initiative to support a rebel group was considered on a case-by-case basis.<sup>99</sup> Due to disagreements over objectives, some members of the administration seemed cautious and Shultz later ‘maintained that the “nature and extent of U.S. support necessarily varies from case to case.”’<sup>100</sup> This is significant for this chapter’s attempt to understand how the notion of a Reagan doctrine was working for and against the interests of the administration’s to legitimize its policy choices.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Philip Taubman, July 11, 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Attachment: Paper Prepared in the Department of State. Washington, undated. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981–1988, Volume III, Soviet Union, January 1981–January 1983*, p. 518; Stephen Skowronek (ed), *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 132. Reagan’s leadership posture was defined by his ‘forthright repudiation of liberal policy failure.’ Consequently, Skowronek argued that the Reagan administration ‘worked at once to discredit received standards of legitimate national government and to elevate new standards.’

<sup>98</sup> ‘Memorandum From the Executive Office of the President: Office of Management and Budget. From Dave Stockman and for Senior White House Staff. Subject: Foreign Aid Budget.’ January 30, 1981. *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library*.

<sup>99</sup> James Scott, ‘Reagan’s Doctrine?: The Formulation of an American Foreign Policy Strategy,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:4 (1996), 1047-1061 (p. 1053).

<sup>100</sup> Scott, p. 1053.

Firstly, Taubman's reporting on and identification of a Reagan doctrine which he associated with the administration's plans to escalate American support in Nicaragua reflects that by 1983, the influx of American supplies and involvement there was having an effect on the size of anti-Sandinista forces that the media and legislators could not help to notice.<sup>101</sup> As Bilsland shows, what began as a policy of interdicting arms headed for El Salvador was now developing 'into a broader strategy focused on applying covert military pressure' on the Sandinista government.<sup>102</sup> The Reagan administration's actions in Nicaragua developed out of an ever evolving policy process being determined by both internal strategic priorities to prevent a communist takeover in Central America and external contingencies, such as the increasing size of anti-Sandinista groups, that created opportunities to pursue its objectives through direct and indirect support. Framing these processes under the Reagan doctrine, nonetheless, was not serving to simply codify the administration's policy practices and principles, but doing so in a way that presented the administration's approach as a consistent strategy rather than a series of ad-hoc decisions. Which, in turn, would have implications later for how proponents of the administration, and officials themselves, defended their choices – particularly in Nicaragua.

For example, Angelo Codevilla, an appointee to the teams preparing the presidential transition in 1980 for the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency, later wrote in 1986 that the Reagan doctrine represented more of a declaratory policy than actual policy.<sup>103</sup> Codevilla stated that the doctrine had been associated with presidential statements pledging American support for anti-communist liberation movements across the globe yet 'purposeful policy to implement that Doctrine has yet to take shape.'<sup>104</sup> In the context of

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<sup>101</sup> Don Oberdorfer & Patrick E. Tyler, 'Reagan Backs Action for Central America,' *The Washington Post* (February 14, 1982), p. A1. - <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00552R000505410080-0.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> Bilsland, p. 211.

<sup>103</sup> Angelo Codevilla, 'The Reagan Doctrine (As Yet) a Declaratory Policy,' in United States Strategic Institute, *Strategic Review Volume 14* (1986), 17-26.

<sup>104</sup> Codevilla, pp. 23.

Taubman's column, and Shultz's later remark that support was determined on a case-by-case basis, by highlighting the scale and implications of its support, the media was playing a crucial role in shaping perceptions about what the Reagan doctrine defined. Doing so, especially at this crucial period when the underlying legitimacy of the policy practices was waning after congressional prohibition of funds, must be seen as contributing to the political pressure that led to Reagan seeking to secure alternative sources of funding for the Contras.<sup>105</sup> Pressure that ultimately led to officials secretly facilitating the illegal sale of arms to Iran, which was subject to an arms embargo, and to use the proceeds to fund the Contras.<sup>106</sup>

However, former C.I.A. official Robert Gates wrote that it was the Carter administration who turned to the Agency to counter Soviet aggression in the third world, beginning in 1979, which led to initiatives such as Operation Cyclone to arm and finance the Afghan mujahideen to repel the Soviet invasion of that nation.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, America had already toppled many left-wing governments such as in Guatemala, Chile, Dominican Republic, and Iran.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the policy practices being undertaken and labelled as the Reagan doctrine were not radically new initiatives regarding how the U.S. engaged in the Cold War.<sup>109</sup> Nor were the initiatives to escalate the use of American military force and

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<sup>105</sup> U.S Congressional Record, Extension of Remarks, July 25, 1983. *Forget the Maine, Hon. Michael D. Barnes, Monday July 25, 1983* (Washington D.C., 1983), p. 20672. -

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1983-pt15/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1983-pt15-4-3.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> Document 3331. 'Talking Points Prepared in the Policy Planning Staff,' Washington, undated. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy. Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/P Files, Memoranda and Correspondence from the Director of the Policy Planning Staff to the Secretary and Other Seventh Floor Principals: Lot 89D149, S/P Chrons December 1988*, p. 1537. This memo to Shultz identified that a failure of the administration was in convincing 'Congress to provide adequate support for Contras.'

<sup>107</sup> Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), pp. 142-145.

<sup>108</sup> David Coleman, 'Lyndon Johnson and the Dominican Intervention of 1965.' *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 513*. Posted – April 28, 2015. -

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB513/>. L.B.J. used force unilaterally in the Dominican Republic which he publicly justified as necessary to save American citizens endangered by the Dominican civil war, yet the Johnson tapes and transcripts show his main motivation was to prevent a communist takeover.

<sup>109</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, 'Ronald Reagan Oral History Project. Final Edited Transcript, Interview with George Shultz. December 18, 2002, Stanford, California,' with Stephen Knott, Marc Selverstone, & James Sterling Young, p. 26. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/george-p-shultz-oral-history>;

support to help overthrow leftist governments necessarily Reagan's since, as Taubman wrote, the policy by 1983 was being driven by Casey's and Fred Ikle's (the undersecretary of defense for policy) determination to do so.<sup>110</sup> 'They managed,' Taubman wrote, 'to get Reagan to approve their plans.'<sup>111</sup> The significance of this is that the degree to which the policy practices being associated with a Reagan doctrine were actually Reagan's own initiatives, and/or constituting a new doctrinal framework to engage in the Cold War, is undermined by these elements. Nonetheless, the use of the 'Reagan doctrine' label was being used to politically define Reagan's leadership in ways which presented it as repudiating coexistence the Soviet Union and its proxies.

Similarly, one of the most controversial and widely discussed initiatives during the first term was the Strategic Defense Initiative (S.D.I.) which became emblematic of Reagan's defense strategy. As the Reagan administration legitimized its repudiation of containment with lofty rhetoric defined by the strategic and moral necessity to promote democratic groups worldwide to diminish Soviet influence, although resisted endorsing this as its doctrine at that stage, S.D.I. repudiated the status quo in Cold War nuclear deterrence strategy which consisted of maintaining the threat of nuclear retaliation rather than developing defensive systems to protect against nuclear attack. Henry Nau told the author in an interview for this study that the idea of it was to ensure 'mutually assured protection,' as opposed to mutually assured destruction; the truism that both sides would be totally destroyed if one decided to use nuclear weapons.<sup>112</sup> Bakashian recalled that for the S.D.I. speech given in March 1983, it was not difficult to write the speech since Reagan 'had such a sense of vision on that one that it was so clear what he believed.'<sup>113</sup> Most of the heat about the initiative, Bakashian stated,

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<sup>110</sup> Taubman, p. 205.

<sup>111</sup> Taubman, p. 205; James M. Scott, 'Reagan's Doctrine?: The Formulation of an American Foreign Policy Strategy,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:4 (1996), pp. 1047-1061.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

<sup>113</sup> Miller Center interview with Aram Bakashian. p. 57.

emanated from the ‘public debate about it and commentary about the concept going on outside the White House.’<sup>114</sup> Reagan sold S.D.I. to the public as a proposed system that would shoot down incoming nuclear missiles and provide a quasi-iron dome which would protect the U.S. from a nuclear attack.<sup>115</sup> Reagan informed the public that, in accordance with America’s obligations under the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and in consultation with U.S. allies, he was directing a comprehensive effort to define a long-term research development programme for defense against the use of strategic nuclear weapons.<sup>116</sup>

James Mann referred to S.D.I. as ‘easily the most far-reaching and expensive of Reagan’s defense programs. It was also a radical departure from past American ideas about national security.’<sup>117</sup> By aiming to develop a defense against nuclear weapons, the policy reintroduced into strategic debates an issue which was shelved in the early 1970s; both due to the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 1972 and due to the effectiveness of ballistic missile defenses.<sup>118</sup> The aim of S.D.I. was to change the game of the Cold War as it sought to ‘develop ways and means of destroying hostile missiles by a series of attacks along their flight path, from their boost phase after launch to their entry into the atmosphere above the United States.’<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 57

<sup>115</sup> Public Broadcasting Service, ‘Reagan Announces SDI,’ March 23, 1983 *PBS American Experience* - <https://www.pbs.org/video/american-experience-reagan-announces-sdi/>

<sup>116</sup> ‘President Reagan’s Remarks on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) to High Level Defense Officials and Staff in the Blue Room on March 23, 1983,’ *Courtesy of Ronald Reagan Presidential Library* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIH4kIEtmR4>

<sup>117</sup> Mann, p. 31.

<sup>118</sup> Holger Nehring, ‘The British Response to SDI: An Introductory Paper,’ in *The British Response to SDI Held in Chancellor’s Hall, Senate House, University of London on July 9, 2003 for the Center of Contemporary British History*. Chaired by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman, KCMG, CBE Paper by Holger Nehring, Seminar edited by Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck., p. 17. - <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/assets/icbh-witness/sdi.pdf>

<sup>119</sup> Nehring, ‘The British Response to SDI: An Introductory Paper,’ p. 17. For other scholarship on the implications of S.D.I., see: Pavel Podvig, ‘Did Star Wars Help End the Cold War? Soviet Response to the SDI Program,’ *Science & Global Security* 25:1 (2017), pp. 3-27. Podvig argued that though the Soviets expressed concerns about the programme, it was not a decisive factor in advancing arms control negotiations, but rather complicated the U.S.-Soviet arms control process.

One of the concerns for certain administration officials in terms of legitimizing the initiative was the fact that it had been popularly labelled as ‘Star Wars.’<sup>120</sup> In this light, Bakashian recalled that whilst certain figures interpreted the ‘Star Wars’ label as potentially undermining the policy since the people that coined it meant it in a derogatory way, by labelling it as such ‘they chose an image that summoned up something very vivid and futuristic and impressive in the public imagination, and it was a popular cultural image that even not very well-informed people could grasp.’ Calling it Star Wars, Bakashian claimed, ‘probably made it seem more credible to a lot of ordinary people. “Oh my God, they can really do something like that?” So, it backfired.’<sup>121</sup> Like the Reagan doctrine, the ‘Star Wars’ label was first used outside of the administration, it was not the official title of a policy document and was frequently used in the press’s scrutiny which – at times – undermined the legitimization of a perceptibly more radical and aggressive, yet strategically necessary, national security policy to combat the Cold War. Paradoxically, however, the simplification of a controversial policy choice into a superficially plausible concept which people could glom on to, similar to why doctrines are often conferred to codify policies and statements to plaster on a front page, could also work to facilitate the legitimization of the initiative.<sup>122</sup>

#### 1984: Reagan’s Legitimacy Affirmed

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<sup>120</sup> Miller Center interview with Aram Bakashian, p. 57; Anette Stimmer, ‘Star Wars or Strategic Defense Initiative: What’s in a Name?’ *University of Oxford* (2019) - <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:cc604efd-7763-4b07-bfb4-f06daf857ee8/files/sgx41mh903>.

<sup>121</sup> Miller Center interview with Aram Bakashian, p. 57; Richard Wirthlin & Wynton C. Hall, *The Greatest Communicator: What Ronald Reagan Taught Me About Politics, Leadership, and Life* (John Wiley & Sons: New York, 2005), p. 117. Wirthlin welcomed the ‘Star Wars’ label.

<sup>122</sup> Peter Grier, ‘U.S. Public Opinion Generally Favours “Star Wars,”’ *The Christian Science Monitor* (November 21, 1985) - <https://www.csmonitor.com/1985/1121/asdi.html>

As the election year of 1984 approached, evaluations of Reagan's leadership were plentiful, and politically motivated.<sup>123</sup> In January 1984, *The New York Times* published an editorial assessing Reagan's leadership during his first term and asserted that, 'Reagan has clearly stepped into the front ranks of those American Presidents who, since World War II, have been willing to employ military force as an instrument of national policy.'<sup>124</sup> Despite certain public relations issues, such as the October 1983 bombing of Lebanon and Reagan's unilateral use of force in Grenada soon after, Reagan was the 'Teflon president' because criticism did not stick to him and his popularity remained high despite overseeing such controversial events.<sup>125</sup> This image was largely a product of Reagan's ability to communicate his vision effectively through various political communicatory strategies. For example, media priming, and utilizing individuals, such as Richard Wirthlin, to take frequent polls to determine the popularity of certain proposals.<sup>126</sup>

Lewis Gould argued that the 1984 campaign against Democrat Walter Mondale 'was largely a formality' since Reagan's popularity, and the disunity of the Democrats, was so visible 'that there seemed no need to articulate a vision of where a second term might go.'<sup>127</sup> The important differences between Mondale and Reagan, however, did not solely stem from political differences but from the fact that Mondale failed to appreciate the power of the

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<sup>123</sup> James Cooper, R. J. Richardson, & Bailey Schwab, *Ronald Reagan's 1984: Politics, Foreign Policy, and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

<sup>124</sup> Richard Halloran, 'Reagan as Military Commander,' *The New York Times* (January 15, 1984) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/15/magazine/reagan-as-military-commander.html>. The American invasion of Grenada, launched on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1983, saw a Marxist regime removed from power through the use of military force.

<sup>125</sup> James F. Clarity & Warren Weaver jr., 'Briefing; To Teflon or Not to Teflon,' *The New York Times* (January 16, 1986) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/01/16/us/briefing-to-teflon-or-not-to-teflon.html>; Ronald Reagan, 'Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada,' (October 27, 1983) *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-events-lebanon-and-grenada>. Reagan retorted, with regards to Lebanon, 'So why are we there? Well, the answer is straightforward: to help bring peace to Lebanon and stability to the vital Middle East.'

<sup>126</sup> Adam Clymer, 'Richard Wirthlin, Pollster Who Advised Reagan, Dies at 80,' *The New York Times* (March 17, 2011) - <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/us/politics/18wirthlin.html>; J. A. Krosnick & D. R. Kinder, 'Altering the Foundations of Support for the President Through Priming,' *The American Political Science Review* 84:2 (1990), pp. 497-512. Priming occurs when the audience is suggested with ways and specific issues that should be used to evaluate the performance of leaders and governments.

<sup>127</sup> Lewis L. Gould (ed), *The Modern American Presidency* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 201.

media, particularly television, and instead focused on rallies and issues.<sup>128</sup> The election was a landslide victory for Reagan. Reagan carried 525 out of the available 538 electoral votes.

Reagan's supporters reminded voters of the malaise the country felt when Mondale was Vice President and to 'remember 1980 with American hostages in Iran. The Soviet Union invading Afghanistan, destabilizing the Third World, pushing communist colonialism into our hemisphere.'<sup>129</sup>

By the end of his first term, it was deemed that Reagan had reasserted not only the presidency's prestige, but also the country's pride and renewed it from its decay.<sup>130</sup> The shaping of a specific narrative surrounding his approach to the Cold War during the first term, defined by his tough rhetoric asserting the moral superiority of the United States over the Soviet Union, taking credit for increasing the military budget (since it began under Carter), launching iconoclastic projects such as S.D.I., and providing military support to anti-communist fighters throughout the world was shaped by the first-term debates over the enunciation of a Reagan doctrine. Consequently, early in the second term, and particularly after the Iran-Contra scandal unfolded, the concept became much more politically charged for opponents and proponents of Reagan's foreign policy. For example, Ted Carpenter of the *Cato Institute* suggested that, after Reagan's 1985 State of the Union address, which Krauthammer defined as the birth of a new Reagan doctrine, the administration's 'rhetoric on this theme increased dramatically thereafter.'<sup>131</sup>

### **The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Leadership: 1985-1989**

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<sup>128</sup> Gillon, 'Walter Mondale and the 1984 Campaign,' p. 160.

<sup>129</sup> The New York Times 'Convention in Dallas: The Republicans; Transcript of Kemp's Address on Reagan's Record,' (August 22, 1984) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/08/22/us/convention-dallas-republicans-transcript-kemp-s-address-reagan-record.html>

<sup>130</sup> Hugh Sidey, 'The Presidency by Hugh Sidey: Tidings at Mid-Passage,' *Time* (December 31, 1984) - <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,951439-2,00.html>.

<sup>131</sup> Ted G. Carpenter, 'U.S. Aid to Anti-Communist Rebels: The "Reagan Doctrine" and Its Pitfalls,' *Cato Institute* (June 24, 1986) - <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/us-aid-anti-communist-rebels-reagan-doctrine-its-pitfalls>.

With the arrival in the Soviet Union of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985, Reagan and his administration were keen to initiate diplomatic channels to begin talks regarding issues such as reducing the number of nuclear weapons.<sup>132</sup> Contemporaries recognized that due to Reagan's willingness to engage in talks with Gorbachev over reducing nuclear weapons that tensions may have been easing between the two superpowers and the hard-line approach of the first term being toned down.<sup>133</sup> However, Reagan later responded to a question during an interview asking whether negotiations with Gorbachev could lead to the former being fooled by the latter with: 'Well, I haven't changed since the time I made a speech about the evil empire.'<sup>134</sup> His administration's rhetoric throughout its second term, despite its diplomatic engagement with the Soviets, substantiated this claim.

On February 22, 1985, Shultz gave a speech to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco during which he justified the administration's unabashed support for the Nicaraguan Contras who, he claimed, were 'on the front line in the struggle for progress, security and freedom in Central America.'<sup>135</sup> Just over two weeks prior, on February 6<sup>th</sup>, Reagan gave his 1985 State of the Union address when he famously proclaimed that, 'We must stand by all our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-

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<sup>132</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, 'Ronald Reagan Oral History Project. Transcript: Interview with James A Baker III, June 15-16, 2004. Houston, Texas,' with Jeff Chidester, Stephen F. Knott, & James Sterling Young, pp. 38-40. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/james-baker-iii-oral-history>. Baker stated that Reagan did not attempt to have a sit down with previous Soviet leaders such as Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov. Gorbachev's arrival made diplomacy a viable option.

<sup>133</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, 'Speaking Terms; Reagan and Gorbachev Tone Down the Rhetoric,' *The New York Times* (August 3, 1986) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/03/weekinreview/speaking-terms-reagan-and-gorbachev-tone-down-the-rhetoric.html>; Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 87. Kotkin goes so far as to say that, 'Gorbachev achieved major, albeit asymmetrical, arms reduction and a deep détente with an American president who in 1983 had vilified the Soviet Union as the evil empire.'

<sup>134</sup> 'President Reagan's Interview with Television Network Broadcasters on December 3, 1987,' Reagan Library - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98Dd\\_ba6q3A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98Dd_ba6q3A)

<sup>135</sup> Document 232. 'Address by Secretary of State Shultz. San Francisco, February 22, 1985. America and the Struggle for Freedom. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy*. Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, April 1985, pp. 16-21.

supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth.’<sup>136</sup> In response, the conservative political commentator Charles Krauthammer wrote his famous article which is now considered by Reagan scholars, and officials, as when the term ‘Reagan doctrine’ was coined.<sup>137</sup> Krauthammer stated that through Reagan’s delivery of this passage, the president was the master of a new idea and had reversed accepted thinking on geopolitics.<sup>138</sup> Reagan, Krauthammer claimed, ‘has produced the Reagan Doctrine...The Reagan Doctrine proclaims overt and unashamed American support for anti-Communist revolution. The grounds are justice, necessity, and democratic tradition.’<sup>139</sup>

Media commentator E.J. Dionne, once a close friend of Krauthammer, told the author in an interview for this study that ‘I think a great case to look into is Charles Krauthammer.’<sup>140</sup> Recalling Dionne’s remarks from a previous chapter that doctrines are often invented by the media to advance a set of policy choices that a commentator wants to advance, Dionne said that ‘I think the relationship between Charles Krauthammer and the Reagan doctrine is an interesting case study into how doctrines work.’<sup>141</sup> Situating the article in that context, Krauthammer wrote that the doctrine intended to ‘establish a new, firmer – a doctrinal – foundation for such support by declaring equally worthy all armed resistance to Communism’ and went so far as to suggest that the Reagan doctrine was revolutionary in its shifting of approaches to dealing with the global communist threat.<sup>142</sup> Krauthammer’s piece

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<sup>136</sup> Ronald Reagan, ‘Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,’ *The American Presidency Project* (February 6, 1985) - <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-5>

<sup>137</sup> Christopher DeMuth et al, *The Reagan Doctrine and Beyond* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1987), p. 4. – [https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/-the-reagan-doctrine-and-beyond\\_154404808049.pdf?x91208](https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/-the-reagan-doctrine-and-beyond_154404808049.pdf?x91208). ‘After Carter came Reagan and the Reagan Doctrine, a name given not by Reagan himself, but by essayist Charles Krauthammer in an effort to give coherent description to a policy that Reagan seems rather to have stumbled into.’

<sup>138</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘Essay: The Reagan Doctrine,’ *Time* (April 1, 1985) - <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,964873,00.html>.

<sup>139</sup> Krauthammer, ‘Essay: The Reagan Doctrine.’

<sup>140</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne., November 20, 2023.

<sup>142</sup> Krauthammer, Essay: The Reagan Doctrine.’

shaped the discourse surrounding the Reagan doctrine throughout Reagan's second term, and arguably since. Krauthammer's identification and description of the Reagan doctrine was not an act of objective commentary on Reagan's foreign policy choices. Rather, it was an attempt to legitimize Reagan's foreign policy according to the author's conservative worldview by rationalizing the advancement of a more hawkish and neoconservative foreign policy with which he sympathized.<sup>143</sup> In early February 1998, an unnamed official in the administration said that, 'Every now and then the enunciation of a "doctrine" sets a banner.'<sup>144</sup> The official said that the 'administration itself does not use the term "Reagan Doctrine" ... The term was quickly embraced by other conservatives to describe the policy of supporting "freedom fighters."' <sup>145</sup> However, in the second term, it did use the term internally in its attempt to shape a positive narrative about Reagan's foreign policy legacy and how the Reagan doctrine fit into it. This would become necessary for proponents of the administration as the second term unfolded when the legitimacy of Reagan's leadership would be undermined due to his administration's commitment to pursue the policies Krauthammer and co supported at all costs.

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<sup>143</sup> Reagan's Communications Director, Pat Buchanan, argued that the neoconservatives subverted the Reagan Revolution through wresting the Republican Party out of the hands of 'true conservatives' such as himself, and Reagan. See: Patrick Buchanan, *Where the Right Went Wrong: How Neoconservatives Subverted the Reagan Revolution and Hijacked the Bush Presidency* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004); Jean F. Drolet, 'A Liberalism Betrayed? American Neoconservatism and the Theory of International Relations,' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 15:2 (2010), 89-118 (p. 91). Drolet thus described neoconservatism as a 'peculiar synthesis of realism and idealism which characterizes the neoconservative mode of political engagement with the world.' Therefore, during the Cold War, neoconservatives saw democracy promotion as a means of immunizing the periphery from communism and they rejected the realist framework, of Henry Kissinger, which sought to accept the legitimacy of the Soviet Union as a state. Also, see: John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs 1945-1994* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. vii. Many neoconservatives held office under President Reagan to reinforce the administration's anti-communist outlook 'while also moving it toward a policy of actively assisting foreign governments or groups trying to develop democratic institutions of their own.' Neoconservatism will be explored in more depth in the chapter on George W. Bush.

<sup>144</sup> Charlotte Saikowski, 'Is the "Reagan Doctrine" Forcing a Soviet Retreat?' *The Commercial Appeal* (February 7, 1988), p. 55. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/773489195/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>145</sup> Saikowski, p. 55.

### The Reagan Doctrine and Controlling the Narrative

A State Department memo prepared for Shultz, which is undated but held within a repository of documents relating to the period from March 1985 to October 1986, was titled ‘Why We Must Have a Relationship with the Soviets.’<sup>146</sup> The document listed the reasons why certain people thought the United States should not have sought a better relationship with the Soviet Union because ‘to try and get a better relationship means “détente,” and détente is another word for appeasement.’<sup>147</sup> Words matter in official rhetoric. And, although the administration wanted to engage diplomatically with the Soviets, Reagan had rhetorically repudiated the détente policy conducted during the 1970s arguing it had been taken advantage of by the Soviets.<sup>148</sup> Legitimizing its diplomacy with the Soviet Union, after Reagan had spent much of his presidency thus far delegitimizing it as a state and its communist ideology, required countering arguments being made that the U.S. should not negotiate with the Soviets even from a position of relative strength ‘(our position today), because negotiations just leads us to give things away.’<sup>149</sup> Even George H.W. Bush, Reagan’s vice president, according to Henry Nau, ‘thought Reagan was going too fast in negotiations with the Soviet Union.’<sup>150</sup>

In turn, the memo read that the administration’s response should include its rejection of détente, reaffirming the U.S. is ‘not panting after a treaty,’ but that the nation was ‘better placed and more prepared than any American Administration has been in decades to achieve

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<sup>146</sup> Document 2. ‘Talking Points for Secretary of State Shultz Prepared in the Department of State,’ Washington, undated. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume V, Soviet Union, March 1985-October 1986*. Source: Reagan Library, George Shultz Papers, Secretary’s Meetings with the President (03/11/1985). No classification marking. These talking points were included in a larger packet for Shultz entitled: “Meeting with the President, Monday, March 11 2:00–2:30 pm,” in preparation for Shultz’s trip to Moscow.

<sup>147</sup> Document 2. ‘Talking Points for Secretary of State Shultz Prepared in the Department of State,’ Washington, undated.

<sup>148</sup> William Beecher, ‘Brezhnev Termed Detente a Ruse, 1973 Report Said,’ *Boston Globe* (February 11, 1977) and ‘Secret Speech: Did Brezhnev Come Clean?’ *National Review* (March 4, 1977): 248-50 located in: Kiron Skinner, Annelise Anderson & Martin Anderson, *Reagan in His Own Hand* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), p. 118.

<sup>149</sup> Document 2.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023.

a new basis for global stability. We have the beginning of a new Reagan Doctrine.’<sup>151</sup> The memo read that its components included Shultz’s Rand speech outlining a new approach to dealing with the Soviets; the Commonwealth Club speech, drawing the lines in ‘our own neighbourhood, Central America’; and the initiative to reverse decades-long trends in the Third World economies (march toward the market) and approach key regional issues creatively (southern Africa, the Pacific Basin). The administration’s job, the memo read, was ‘to end the cycle of intervention/withdrawal that has characterized U.S. foreign policy historically—and to establish a new basis for global security and progress that can last well into the next century.’<sup>152</sup>

Further advancing this narrative, National Security Adviser Frank Carlucci wrote a memo in late 1986 within which he stated that history would judge Reagan’s contributions to have included rebuilding America’s strength, restoring America’s confidence in itself, introducing S.D.I., and ‘launching the “Reagan Doctrine” of providing aid to those fighting Marxist regimes around the world whether in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Angola or elsewhere.’<sup>153</sup> Similarly, during a meeting between Reagan, Shultz, Ken Duberstein (then Reagan’s chief of staff), and Carlucci in September 1987, the president and his staff spoke of the different atmosphere in the Soviet Union after Gorbachev came to power in 1985.<sup>154</sup> Shultz then hints to Reagan that, ‘The China of your Administration could be U.S.S.R. Different than detente. Detente was making existing systems interact. Gorb. changing theirs; we interact w/changed system. An aspect of the Reagan doctrine.’<sup>155</sup> This excerpt, as well as the previous two documents, emphasizes the Reagan doctrine becoming a self-legitimizing

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<sup>151</sup> Document 2.

<sup>152</sup> Document 2.

<sup>153</sup> Document 288. Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Carlucci) to President Reagan, Washington, December 24, 1986. Subject: NSC Activities. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy. Source: Reagan Library, Frank Carlucci Files, Chronology—Official (12/09/1986–12/30/1986). Confidential*, p. 1248.

<sup>154</sup> Document 77. ‘Notes Prepared by the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Carlucci).’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981-1988, Volume VI, Soviet Union, October 1986-January 1989*, pp. 390-391.

<sup>155</sup> Document 77, pp. 390-391.

concept the administration was beginning to use to frame its own shifts away from a more confrontational to a diplomatic posture to bring the Soviets to heel to American interests and strategic demands. Unlike Nixon who engaged with existing systems in his prioritizing of balancing global power, the Reagan administration's more Wilsonian thrust welcomed the internal liberalizing trends inside the Soviet Union and wanted to take some credit for them.<sup>156</sup>

Whereas Nixon and as we shall see, George W. Bush, officially endorsed their presidential doctrines through specifically invoking them in their public rhetoric, the Reagan administration's ever-growing private usage of the 'Reagan doctrine' label evidences that although the term was becoming a central part in shaping Reagan's historical legacy, they did not seek to confer the same level of public recognition to the label whilst in office. As the subsequent subsection shall show, though the administration was steadfast in its support for freedom fighters, the Reagan doctrine had become too charged a concept in the discourse for them themselves to publicly endorse due to the controversial means the administration went about executing that 'doctrine.'

With the assumption to power of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, the Reagan administration now understood that there was a leader with whom the United States could work in the reduction of tensions and nuclear weapons; these aims were made possible more so by Gorbachev's dedication to opening up and reforming the Soviet Union's economy as well as its strict codes of censorship.<sup>157</sup> It, therefore, needed to think carefully about how to engage with Gorbachev by being conscious of the type of rhetoric the administration employed to not undermine the changes being made in Soviet society. Stephen Kotkin wrote

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<sup>156</sup> The White House, *National Security Decision Directive Number 32* (Washington DC, 1982), pp. 1-2. This document stated that American national security policy will be guided by certain global objectives: to strengthen America's global influence, to neutralise the efforts of the U.S.S.R to increase its influence, and to 'encourage long-term liberalization and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union and allied countries.'

<sup>157</sup> Kotkin, p. 61.

that Gorbachev sought to democratize and reenergize the Communist Party to lead the successful reform process.<sup>158</sup> In turn, Reagan and Gorbachev's diplomatic relationship was very much defined by the internal politics of both countries.

In his memoir, Gorbachev wrote that his dialogue with Reagan was constructive, yet emotional, and tempers 'became heated whenever we touched upon topics such as human rights, regional conflicts and the notorious Strategic Defense Initiative.'<sup>159</sup> Consequently, during a meeting with Thatcher on March 30, 1987 in Moscow, Gorbachev was lectured by the iron lady on the superiority of capitalism in creating a free democratic society and that, 'What I am saying is that it is not only important to do something in your society, but also to make sure that others interpret it correctly.'<sup>160</sup> Gorbachev responded saying that the 'most important thing is to remain grounded in reality, otherwise we will all be in grave danger' to which Thatcher said: 'It is very important for us that you give up the doctrine of communist world domination.'<sup>161</sup> Gorbachev answered:

We never proclaimed such a doctrine. There is the Truman Doctrine, the Eisenhower Doctrine, the neo-globalist Reagan Doctrine. All of these doctrines were publicly proclaimed by presidents. But you will not find our statements about "planting the domination of communism" because they do not exist. They were just attributed to us.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Kotkin, p. 61.

<sup>159</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), p. 523.

<sup>160</sup> 'Record of Conversation Between Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher. March 30, 1987, Moscow,' *National Security Archive, George Washington University*, p. 3. - <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/28335-document-15-record-conversation-between-mikhail-gorbachev-and-margaret-thatcher>

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.3.

Thatcher then remarked that Soviet representatives had made such statements and she could provide quotes. 'Provide them,' Gorbachev demanded. 'There is philosophy, and then there is politics and reality.'<sup>163</sup>

This exchange highlights how Gorbachev politically interpreted America's doctrines within the contexts of his worldview and his own country's strategic interests. Despite Gorbachev's liberalizing perestroika and glasnost reforms inside the Soviet Union, this exchange reflects how he was still unwilling to acknowledge the expansionist nature of previous Soviet leaders' statements about the inevitability of communism's eventual global adoption and their eagerness to precipitate this eventuality.<sup>164</sup> Though Gorbachev dismissed the communist globalizing philosophy guiding his predecessors, thereby implying such statements were not serious reflections of Soviet foreign policy in practice, he did not distinguish between the philosophy underpinning American presidential rhetoric and actual foreign policy choices. That philosophy, Henry Kissinger observed, was underpinned by a sense of mission because to most Americans, 'America has always stood for something other than its own grandeur. But a clearer understanding of America's interests and of the requirements of equilibrium can give perspective to our idealism and lead to humane and moderate objectives, especially in relation to political and social change.'<sup>165</sup> Gorbachev's understanding and framing of the Reagan doctrine as globalist, and thereby another expression of an expansionist American grand strategy as codified by previous doctrines, were in terms which contradicted the administration's justification for supporting rebel

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>164</sup> 'We Will Bury You!' *Time* (November 26, 1956) - <https://web.archive.org/web/20070124152821/http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,867329,00.html>. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev addressed western ambassadors in the Polish embassy in Moscow on November 18, 1956, and declared that, 'About the capitalist states, it doesn't depend on you whether or not we exist. If you don't like us, don't accept our invitations, and don't invite us to come to see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you!'

<sup>165</sup> Henry Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy: Three Essays* (New York: W.W. Horton, 1969), pp. 51-97.

groups in the name of freedom and democracy.<sup>166</sup> Domestically, this narrative was under attack as the second term progressed.

### The Domestic Politics of the Reagan Doctrine

While any president can lay claim to a set of accomplishments, ‘building a legacy requires buy-in from those who lived through presidential terms of service as well as later generations. Legacy requires mass reflection upon the past and, to a certain extent, a consensus on how we interpret history.’<sup>167</sup> The Reagan administration, and its supporters in politics and culture, began constructing a positive legacy whilst still in office to ensure a robust future for conservatism.<sup>168</sup> Already in 1986, *The New York Times* was writing about ‘The Reagan Legacy’ being as far-reaching as Franklin Roosevelt’s.<sup>169</sup> Democrats now conceded that America had reckoned with the Vietnam legacy and for the first time since the war, the country ‘now projects self-confidence and authority.’<sup>170</sup> Though this reassertion of confidence and authority was a product of a multitude of interplaying factors, including Reagan’s ability to effectively communicate national priorities and the build-up of America’s military might, the Reagan doctrine contributed a political role.

Sidney Blumenthal, who went on to serve in the Clinton administration, reported in 1986 for the *Washington Post* that the House of Representatives ‘voiced its approval of the

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<sup>166</sup> Kagan, p. 209. Support for anti-communist guerrillas was, according to former Reagan administration official Robert Kagan, a logical outgrowth of a wider policy of ‘supporting democratic reform or revolution everywhere, in countries ruled by right-wing dictators as well as by communist parties.’

<sup>167</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane & Sylvia Ellis, ‘An Introduction to Presidential Legacy,’ in Michael Patrick Cullinane & Sylvia Ellis, *Constructing Presidential Legacy: How We Remember the American President* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> Sarah Thompson, ‘As We Rethink Ronald Reagan’s Legacy, We Should Also Rethink How and Why it Was Constructed,’ *The Washington Post* (August 12, 2019) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/12/we-rethink-ronald-reagans-legacy-we-should-also-rethink-how-why-it-was-constructed/>

<sup>169</sup> Bernard Weinraub, ‘The Reagan Legacy,’ *The New York Times Magazine* (June 22, 1986) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/06/22/magazine/the-reagan-legacy.html>

<sup>170</sup> Weinraub.

Reagan Doctrine by passing \$100 million in military aid to the Nicaraguan contras.’<sup>171</sup>

Blumenthal argued that the doctrine was ‘working as a domestic political device by which the conservative elite exercises its influence.’<sup>172</sup> Blumenthal wrote that, ‘To that degree, what is called the Reagan Doctrine is actually a condition of American politics – a condition as old as the Cold War.’<sup>173</sup> For example, a Republican legislator told Blumenthal the doctrine was being used to deal with heretics and support for it ‘became tests of orthodoxy and validity. The Reagan Doctrine is very useful for the movement.’<sup>174</sup> What this shows is that gaining legitimacy for the policy of supporting the Contras became, in part, a product of how the Reagan doctrine was ideologically politicized as a cudgel with which to exclude even those in the Republican camp who disagreed with the administration’s policy choices.

On July 29, 1986, Rep. Mark D. Siljander (R-Michigan) stated during a session of Congress that a major foreign policy disappointment of the Reagan administration has been its failure to ‘wean Marxist regimes in Africa away from Moscow and Havana.’<sup>175</sup> Referring specifically to Mozambique, Siljander declared that the president’s failure in that country was notable and that ‘policy is inconsistent with the Reagan Doctrine and has failed in its implementation’ since the Marxist government still functioned with support from Zimbabwe and the Soviet bloc.<sup>176</sup> To such Republicans, Reagan’s foreign policy was not going far enough to undermine authoritarian Marxist regimes and the president’s doctrine, as Siljander

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<sup>171</sup> Sidney Blumenthal, ‘The Reagan Doctrine’s Strange History,’ *The Washington Post* (June 28, 1986) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1986/06/29/the-reagan-doctrines-strange-history/2b47b9c0-613d-4a06-962b-d8cae0c6aded/>.

<sup>172</sup> Blumenthal.

<sup>173</sup> Blumenthal.

<sup>174</sup> Blumenthal. Blumenthal wrote that, ‘Prominent among those in the crusade for the Reagan Doctrine have been White House Communications Director Patrick Buchanan; former National Security Council staffer Christopher Lehman at the consulting firm of Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly; columnist Charles Krauthammer; Under Secretary of Defense Fred Ikle; professional adventurer and right-wing culture hero Jack Wheeler.’

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, ‘The Resistance can Win in Mozambique – Hon. Mark D. Siljander’ in Extension of Remarks – July 29, 1986. (Washington D.C., 1986), p. 18017. -

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt13/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt13-1-3.pdf>

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 18017.

definitionally understood it, was judged as being inconsistently executed in practice and Reagan's leadership authority was second-guessed as a consequence. Skowronek showed that, 'Any ambiguity in a president's political position will quickly be clarified by others at his expense. Any contradictions engendered in the course of acting on a position once clearly staked out will embolden and legitimize those who would oppose it.'<sup>177</sup>

In this way, on July 29, 1986, during a session of Congress, Rep. Bob Edgar (D-Pennsylvania) asked why Reagan did not advocate strength in denouncing and imposing sanctions on South Africa for the racial violence being committed there.<sup>178</sup> Edgar said that, 'The President has preached that the Reagan doctrine is to fight for freedom wherever it is denied,' but asked why this doctrine was not being implemented in places like South Africa. In this vein, he retorted, 'Where is this doctrine of freedom when men of God such as Archbishop Tutu plead for action, and we give them only words.'<sup>179</sup> These remarks underscore how despite Reagan's effectiveness at communication, the doctrine with which he was now associated was susceptible to attack for sanctioning inconsistent decision-making. Whereas certain Democrats were highlighting inconsistencies in Reagan's foreign policy by scrutinizing policy decisions that purportedly contradicted the purpose of the Reagan doctrine, others charged it as based upon strategically fallacious assumptions. Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wisconsin) charged the Reagan administration with an over extended foreign policy because it 'goes far beyond a strategic and conventional arms race with the Soviet Union. It calls for extending our country's commitment all over the world.'<sup>180</sup> Beginning his remarks with the title 'How the Reagan Doctrine Repudiates Taft and Eisenhower' – in

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<sup>177</sup> Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 24.

<sup>178</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, 'Official Democratic Response to the President's South Africa Address,' in Extension of Remarks – July 29, 1986. (Washington D.C., 1986), p. 18025. - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt13/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt13-1-3.pdf>

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 18025.

<sup>180</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, *Proceedings and Debates of the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session. Senate – Tuesday, May 5, 1987.* (Washington D.C., 1987), p. 11039. - <https://www.congress.gov/100/crecb/1987/05/05/GPO-CRECB-1987-pt9-1-1.pdf>

reference to the traditional conservative outlooks of Robert A. Taft and Dwight Eisenhower – the legislator associated Reagan with a radical policy which overextended American foreign policy, unnecessarily repudiated sensible outlooks of which Reagan was supposedly a product, and which were contributing to the hugely growing deficit.<sup>181</sup> Proxmire declared, ‘Under the Reagan doctrine it is not enough to consider responding to the pleas of other nations for U.S. support. We have to search out regimes that might be subject to Soviet pressure and ask them to let us help them.’<sup>182</sup>

Democratic presidential hopeful, Sen. Joe Biden (D-Delaware), endeavoured to undermine Reagan’s leadership during a speech in mid-June 1987 when he claimed that, ‘The Reagan doctrine assumes that change comes through force...It reduces the struggle between freedom and tyranny to the exchange of fire: AK-47s versus M-16s.’<sup>183</sup> In response to Biden’s criticism, Reagan wrote in his diary what the historical record shows to be the only instance when he mentioned the Reagan doctrine by name whilst in office. Within an entry for June 15, 1987, Reagan wrote that he saw Senator Joe Biden on television the previous evening and referred to him as a ‘smooth but pure demagog – out to save [America] from the Reagan Doctrine.’<sup>184</sup> The context of these charges against Reagan’s foreign policy leadership was defined by the ongoing Iran-Contra scandal. A critical moment when the legitimacy of Reagan’s policy choices in Nicaragua was being severely undermined.

The Iran-Contra scandal has spawned a broad array of scholarship analyzing how various aspects of Reagan’s presidential leadership style, such as his tendency to delegate tasks to his subordinates, and his administration’s strategic priorities, such as supporting the Contras, precipitated an illegal policy of funding the Contras in Nicaragua. This occurred

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 11039.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 11039.

<sup>183</sup> Robert Shogan, ‘Biden Outlines Foreign Policy Stand, Criticizes John Kennedy’s,’ *Los Angeles Times* (May 29, 1987) - <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-05-29-mn-2179-story.html>

<sup>184</sup> Reagan & Brinkley, p. 507.

through funnelling to the group the proceeds made from arms sales to Iran which had an arms embargo placed on it in exchange for the release of American hostages; the latter initiative being further complicated by the fact America was also arming and funding Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).<sup>185</sup> Lawrence Walsh's report of the independent counsel, investigating the Iran-Contra affair, found that Reagan's conduct in the scandal fell short of criminality but that Reagan 'created the conditions which made possible the crimes committed by others.'<sup>186</sup>

The administration's privatization of foreign policy, its use of off-the-books covert operations in Iran and Nicaragua, and its commitment to defeat the Soviet Union led to it resorting to extra-legal methods to achieve its aims and was a direct product of Reagan's leadership.<sup>187</sup> In May 1987, Sen. John Kerry (D-Massachusetts) wrote a column stating that, 'As we begin the hearings on the Iran-Contra debacle, we have the opportunity to ask ourselves whether what went wrong was the result of abuse of power by a few men or a failure inherent in the Reagan Doctrine itself.'<sup>188</sup> Kerry claimed that certain domestic aspects of the Iran-Contra affair, which he argued were a failure to respect the rule of law, the replacement of policy-making by Congress with policy-making by military personnel and operatives in the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency 'are closely linked to the central theme of the Reagan Doctrine: that U.S. military operations, overt and

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<sup>185</sup> E. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nicaragua* (New York: Harper Collins, 1987); Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (California: University of California Press, 1991); Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*; Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affairs* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1991).

<sup>186</sup> Lawrence E. Walsh, *Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters: Volume 1: Investigations and Prosecutions* (Washington D.C., 1993).

<sup>187</sup> U.S. Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition, and House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran, *Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair*, pp. 43-46. For scholarship on what caused Iran-Contra, see: Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2014); Ann Wroe, *Lives, Lies and the Iran-Contra Affair* (London: New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1991).

<sup>188</sup> John Kerry, 'Iran-Contra Affair Highlights Failures of Reagan Doctrine,' *The Missoulian* (May 6, 1987), p. 7. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/350801591/?terms=Reagan%20Doctrine&match=1>

covert, are the most desirable way of increasing American security.’<sup>189</sup> During this period, the doctrine which conservatives in the media and politics had worked so hard to defend was now being defined by Reagan’s opponents in terms which made his foreign policy legacy vulnerable to attack.

Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Indiana), during the closing remarks of Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North’s congressional testimony, criticized the Reagan administration’s secrecy in sanctioning covert action without Congress knowing about it and that, as Bud McFarlane later stated, it was unwise to rely on covert action as the core of foreign policy.<sup>190</sup> North praised Reagan’s leadership in foreign policy, despite the mistakes, by naming the nascent democracies throughout Latin America – such as El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala – which had arisen ‘since Ronald Reagan has been President, and they’ve occurred because of an insistence on democracy.’<sup>191</sup> Hamilton noted to North that, ‘You have spoken with compelling eloquence about the Reagan Doctrine. And laudable as that doctrine may be, it will not succeed unless it has the support of the Congress and the American people.’<sup>192</sup> Although Reagan’s approval ratings plummeted to 49% in January 1987, by December 1988 his rating recovered at 63%.<sup>193</sup> Reagan’s legitimacy thus took a temporary hit. However, no criminal charges were brought against Reagan, nor did Congress consider direct disciplinary action against him, because it was largely deemed that the nation did not need a repeat of Watergate when presidential power was heavily curtailed.<sup>194</sup> It was North’s defense that his

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<sup>189</sup> Kerry, p. 7.

<sup>190</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, Extension of Remarks – *July 15, 1987*. (Washington D.C., 1987), p. 20102. - <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1987/07/15/extensions-of-remarks-section>

<sup>191</sup> Reel America, Iran-Contra Investigation Day 28 Part 1, July 14, 1987. *C-Span* - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?9537-1/iran-contra-investigation-day-28-part-1>

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 20102.

<sup>193</sup> Frank Newport, Jeffrey M. Jones, & Lydia Saad, ‘Ronald Reagan From the People’s Perspective: A Gallup Poll Review,’ *Gallup News Service* (June 7, 2004) - <https://web.archive.org/web/20221216140636/https://news.gallup.com/poll/11887/ronald-reagan-from-peoples-perspective-gallup-poll-review.aspx>

<sup>194</sup> Anthony S. Winer, ‘Reagan Doctrine, the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, and the Role of a Sole Superpower,’ *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 22 (2004), 186–188.

criminality did not stem from personal gain, but out of love and dedication for his country, to serve his president, and to advance deeply held American values across the globe which contributed to his popularity amongst the American right.<sup>195</sup>

In February 1988, Rep. Bob Livingstone (R-Louisiana) decried that,

As we thumb through the lexicon of geopolitics, a major new label seems desperately needed with respect to what is going on in Congress relative to Nicaragua. At present, there is the well-known “Reagan Doctrine,” which proposes that we must somehow liberate Nicaragua from Soviet and Cuban colonialism and repression. But, to date, there is no proper label for the opposing doctrine – the anti-liberation doctrine – of those who disagree with the president and with those in Congress who support him.<sup>196</sup>

Such testimony speaks to its ubiquitous rhetorical usage during the 1980s, highlighting the deep ideological divides within Congress and the broader American public about it. By the end of Reagan’s second term, then, the doctrine was clearly highly politicized. In certain respects, it served as a gatekeeper issue over which politicians needed to either support or condemn. The doctrine, mainly championed by Reagan’s supporters, emphasized the administration’s commitment to countering Soviet influence through support for anti-communist movements worldwide, such as in Nicaragua. Their repeated public defense of that doctrine in political rhetoric played a crucial role in defining Reagan’s legacy in foreign policy. It underscored his administration’s aggressive stance on foreign policy and

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<sup>195</sup> Curt Suplee, ‘Ollie North and Our Hunger for a Hero,’ *The Washington Post* (July 18, 1987) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1987/07/19/ollie-north-and-our-hunger-for-a-hero/6896c761-a449-4e9a-85aa-db26151e97e9/>; Jack Stripling, ‘Oliver North Invited to Speak at Alachua County Republican Rally,’ *The Gainesville Sun* (February 3, 2008) - <https://eu.gainesville.com/story/news/2008/02/03/oliver-north-invited-to-speak-at-alachua-county-republican-rally/64292615007/>

<sup>196</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, ‘Hon. Bob Livingstone: Congressional Democrats’ Policy Toward Nicaragua,’ in Extension of Remarks – February 3, 1988. (Washington D.C., 1988), p. 932. - <https://www.congress.gov/100/crecb/1988/02/03/GPO-CRECB-1988-pt1-7-3.pdf>

commitment to promoting democracy and freedom as cornerstones of American values. By firmly associating these efforts with a Reagan doctrine, Reagan's supporters helped cement his reputation as a staunch anti-communist leader, leaving a lasting imprint on subsequent perceptions about presidential leadership in American foreign policy while reaffirming Reagan's vision of a world shaped by American ideals of liberty and resistance to tyranny; a vision his administration was willing, at times, to pursue at all costs.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a definitive exploration into how the Reagan doctrine was rhetorically employed and politicized throughout Ronald Reagan's presidency. Through engaging in an historical examination of the doctrine's evolving definition and meaning in American political discourse, starting during the 1980 presidential campaign, the chapter has thus shown that the notion of an operative Reagan doctrine was consistently rhetorically weaponized as a political cudgel by those seeking to either defend or criticize Reagan's leadership over foreign affairs. The extent to which the rhetorical use of the doctrine contributed to the legitimization or delegitimization of Reagan's foreign policy choices depended on the agent's motivations in assessing Reagan's leadership. Not one instance when the doctrine was discussed was any given interpretation of its substance or implication for American grand strategy the exact same as another.

Definitions of the doctrine were contextually dependent. Initially, during the 1980 campaign and the first term, it was recognized that Reagan was repudiating the foreign policy legacies of the 1970s, but the notion of a Reagan doctrine was still unclear vis a vis the overarching thrust of Reagan's foreign policy and its use was defined by an apprehension that Reagan would produce a lofty statement on grand strategy instead of taking control of the

policy process. As it became clear the administration was determined to go to great lengths to provide military and covert aid to rebel groups, particularly in Central America, the notion that these policies constituted a doctrine became more politicized and Reaganites endeavoured to pre-empt favourable understandings of that purported doctrine's purpose and meaning in Cold War foreign policy.

Though the administration never used the term 'Reagan doctrine' publicly, they discussed it internally as being one of the core pillars of Reagan's overarching grand strategy that would be central to how his legacy would be remembered. Although the administration had strong convictions about supporting anti-leftist groups, and some policy decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, their internal discussions in the second term recognized the doctrine's discursive utility to confer further legitimacy upon their decisions. Reagan's successor, his vice president, was not comfortable using the type of moralistic and lofty rhetoric that Reagan used. In turn, though some officials in the George H.W. Bush administration wanted to label certain statements and policy practices designed to consolidate the end of the Cold War as the Bush doctrine, it was not Bush's style to associate with such a conceit.

### Chapter 3

#### **The First Bush Doctrine and the Legitimation of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter will explore how the rhetorical use of the Bush doctrine facilitated and undermined the legitimation of George H.W. Bush's foreign policy choices throughout his presidency from 1989 to 1993. Although Bush did not ever use the term 'doctrine' and more broadly rejected what he called the 'vision thing,' he was attributed with many doctrines by commentators, journalists, foreign leaders, and some administration officials.<sup>1</sup> While doctrines are often rhetorically employed to define the president in the beholder's own terms, during the first Bush presidency, those sympathetic to Bush's efforts to bring the Cold War to a peaceful and favourable conclusion wanted Bush to be more proactive in defining his statecraft in his own terms, and even after himself. Opinions varied widely about the priorities of American foreign policy in this new era, how America should secure the peace, and how the president should communicate these changes to the polity.<sup>2</sup>

However, as Skowronek argued, 'the idea of a personal vision runs the contrary to a leadership project whose chief warrants entail adherence to an established orthodoxy; it was an expectation that could not but put this president at cross-purposes.'<sup>3</sup> Relative to the other three presidential doctrines under study in this thesis, the definition of the first Bush doctrine was the most fleeting and abstract. Although each doctrine under study respectively codified

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Ajemian, 'Where is the Real George Bush? The Vice President Must Now Step Out from Reagan's Shadow,' *Time* (January 26, 1987) - <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,963342,00.html>; Hal Brands, 'The Vision Thing,' *Miller Center* (January 14, 2016) - <https://millercenter.org/issues-policy/foreign-policy/the-vision-thing>.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Little, *Us Versus Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (California: University of California Press, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 104.

different principles, policy practices, and priorities at different moments to different actors, the first Bush doctrine was contested during a period when the U.S. evolved out of the bipolar Cold War epoch and into the unipolar moment. Therefore, Bush had to simultaneously present himself as Reagan's faithful son yet review and redirect various aspects of U.S. grand strategy; including nuclear weapons strategy, Soviet-European relations, and American-European relations to name the most major considerations. In each of these areas, agents in the administration and the media discerned new doctrines, supposedly being developed out of Bush's choices, that were repudiating the frameworks of the Cold War and they often advised Bush to endorse them as his own.<sup>4</sup> Such conceits, nonetheless, ran contrary to Bush's more humble and pragmatic style of leadership.

This chapter will be structured into two main sections. The first section will delve into the 1988 election and how a doctrine was being framed within the broader game of political definition during that episode. From this moment, it will become clear that Bush saw doctrines as a conceit and did not wish to associate with one despite being questioned about what he would like his to be known as and what his grand strategic priorities would be as president. The second section will trace the discursive expression of the Bush doctrine during Bush's presidency. During Bush's sole term in office, the international system underwent a dramatic shift after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Bush proclaimed a new world order defined by international cooperation and shared responsibility to promote stability around the world, issued national security strategies and reviews on America's role in the post-Cold War world and authorized the use of force in the Gulf in what turned out to be America's first major conflict since the Vietnam War. Examining how actors perceived Bush's decisions and initiatives to be the beginnings of a new Bush doctrine, and how the

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<sup>4</sup> Skowronek, p. 104. Once in office, 'Bush found himself hounded by the media for his reluctance to articulate his own vision for the nation.'

administration was confronted with the prospect of proclaiming doctrines, will contribute to the thesis' effort to understand the subjective and politicized nature of doctrines and what circumstances influence an administration's preference to reject or associate itself with them.

### **The Bush Doctrine, the 1988 Presidential Election, and Succeeding Reagan**

During the 1988 campaign, Bush asserted that, 'We don't need radical new directions, we need strong and steady leadership.'<sup>5</sup> Bush's Secretary of State, and long-time friend, James Baker stated that during the 1988 campaign, 'we were quite content to campaign on the idea of a continuation of policies of a successful two-term Reagan presidency.'<sup>6</sup> On paper, Bush presented himself as Reagan's faithful successor declaring that no new taxes would be raised, but only to find – whilst in office – that fiscal conditions necessitated that they must be raised.<sup>7</sup> During an interview for this study, Chase Untermeyer, a long-time friend of Bush and his Director of the White House Presidential Personnel Office from 1989 to 1991, observed that,

You have to see Bush coming out of the Reagan administration and being involved deeply in many of its foreign policy issues. But providing the extra power that came from his own experience... We used the Reagan administration as the departure point, as the base. And considered that everything that had been done by Ronald Reagan

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Duffy & Dan Goodgame, *Marching in Place: The Status Quo Presidency of George Bush* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, 'George H.W. Bush Oral History Project. Transcript: Interview with James A. Baker III, January 29, 2000. Charlottesville, Virginia,' with James S. Young, Tarek E. Masoud, Sidney Milkis, Philip Zelikow & Peter Roussel, p. 11. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/james-baker-iii-oral-history-2000>

<sup>7</sup> '1988 Flashback: George H.W. Bush Says, "Read My Lips: No New Taxes" | NBC News.' August 18, 1988, - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdVSqSNHhVo>. This later came to be seen, by many on the Republican right, as a betrayal of the Reagan Revolution. See: David Rosenbaum, 'Gingrich Assails Bush's Budget Chief,' *The New York Times* (December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/01/us/gingrich-assails-bush-s-budget-chief.html>

over eight years continued into the Bush administration until such a time as a change was made.<sup>8</sup>

In foreign policy, then, Bush modified the received agenda vis a vis Reagan's approach with the Soviet Union – such as the disarmament talks and the promotion of internal liberalization in eastern Europe – yet rearticulated the relationship so as to adjust it to the demands of the changing times.<sup>9</sup> The 1988 Republican Party platform proclaimed that, 'Countries all over the world, even the Soviet Union, are abandoning worn out industrial policy planning by government in favour of the market-oriented policies underlying what foreign leaders call the "American Miracle."' <sup>10</sup> In turn, the Party platform advocated for advancing these developments through initiatives such as further reducing international trade barriers. Since Reagan had overseen the initial coordination of these initiatives, people recognized that Bush would need to frame his adoption of them, as well as their adaptation, in his own terms to present himself as a leader all his own.

This was reiterated to the author by David Demarest, Bush's communications director, in an interview for this study. Demarest said that one issue during the campaign was to have Bush presented as his own man in both domestic and foreign policy and not as merely constituting a 'third Reagan term.'<sup>11</sup> Though, as Baker mentioned, the Bush campaign was happy to praise the policies of the Reagan administration for which Bush had served as vice president for eight years, certain people around Bush, and certain supporters, recognized the necessity of having him define himself as his own man. In late December 1987, a journalist

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024. Also see: Chase Untermeyer, *Zenith: In the White House with George H.W. Bush* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> The White House, *National Security Review-3*. Subject: Comprehensive Review of US-Soviet Relations. *George H.W. Bush Presidential Library* (Washington D.C., February 15, 1989). - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsr/nsr3.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Republican Party Platform of 1988, *An American Vision: For Our Children and Our Future. The American Presidency Project*, August 16, 1998 - <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1988>

<sup>11</sup> Interview with David Demarest, June 28, 2023.

with the *Concord Monitor* reminded Bush that several presidents ‘have taken a foreign policy initiative that has evolved into a doctrine named after them.’<sup>12</sup> The reporter thus asserted: ‘We have the Reagan Doctrine about aiding freedom fighters in different parts of the world. Jimmy Carter on human rights, the Truman Doctrine. What would you like to see become known as the Bush Doctrine?’<sup>13</sup>

To this question, Bush responded by saying that he would love to be the president that achieved a ban on chemical and biological weapons, but believed the journalist was asking too broad a question. The journalist responded with: ‘Yes, enunciating a fundamental principle that guides foreign policy.’ Bush’s response to this was to say it was too cliché to become associated with a phrase such as ‘peace through strength’ (a clear departure in communication from Reagan), but ‘I’d like to be the freedom president. Maybe that’s the way to put it in a broad context.’<sup>14</sup> In his response, Bush said that just because he would be committed to encouraging democracy abroad, and would like to be known as the ‘freedom president,’ that this would mean he would take unacceptable risks; for example, America did not intervene in Hungary in 1956 during the crushing of dissidents as it was not strategically or feasibly to do so.<sup>15</sup> Bush finished with: ‘You made me think, which is a horrible thing.’<sup>16</sup>

Here, Bush did not answer specifically what he would want a Bush doctrine to be and/or that he wished to be associated with a doctrine. This exchange exemplifies Bush’s well-known discomfort with publicly declaring lofty and broad ideals about foreign policy and his commitment to a subtle approach to communication.<sup>18</sup> For Bush, he recalled how freedom fighters in Hungary, during the 1956 uprising, were defeated by the state’s forces

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<sup>12</sup> *Concord Monitor*, ‘Bush’s Views of Soviets, Economy, Leadership,’ (December 30, 1987), p. 15. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/924510367/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>13</sup> ‘Bush’s Views of Soviets, Economy, Leadership,’ p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Concord Monitor*, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey A. Engel, ‘A Better World...but Don’t Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H.W. Bush Twenty Years On,’ *Diplomatic History* 34:1 (2010), 25-46 (p. 25).

which to him, therefore, necessitated that foreign policy be calculated and particular in the choices officials make regarding what lines of action to pursue. Consequently, providing a pre-presidency glimpse into Bush's aversion to such conceits as doctrines out of a preference to make policy on pragmatic bases.<sup>19</sup>

As had occurred in the elections already studied thus far, the labelling of a candidate's position, as the beholder understood and sought to portray it, as defining their doctrine, also had negative implications for sustaining their leadership prospects; especially when agents sought to define the candidate in their own more damning terms. Bush's Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis, was attempting to repudiate the Reagan administration's foreign policy of illegally arming the Contras in his effort to seek a more just relationship with Central American countries as well as proclaiming that America's commitment should be to defend freedom 'not by going it alone, but by building strong alliances to protect our security and to create a shared prosperity.'<sup>20</sup> Repudiating the Reagan-Bush years led to Dukakis' opponents to counterattack and define his prospective leadership as weak and naïve.<sup>21</sup> In May 1988, Michael Kinsley, writing in *The Daily Sentinel*, said that Dukakis had made remarks proposing that foreign policy should be based on cooperation among allies rather than superpower prerogative.<sup>22</sup> The 'Dukakis Doctrine,' wrote Kinsley in his strawman interpretation of Dukakis' position, 'holds that we should sometimes defer to other countries about how to protect our own national security, even if we think they're wrong. How naïve is

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<sup>19</sup> Henry Raymont, *Troubled Neighbours: The Story of U.S.-Latin American Relations from FDR to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 283. Raymont argued that Bush sought more pragmatic solutions to foreign policy problems without having to worry about the indignation it might incur from the Republican Party's ideological right.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Dukakis on Foreign Policy. January 28, 1988, C-Span. - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?1174-1/michael-dukakis-foreign-policy>

<sup>21</sup> Paul Taylor, 'GOP Unity Meeting Zeros In On Dukakis,' *The Washington Post* (June 12, 1988) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/06/12/gop-unity-meeting-zeros-in-on-dukakis/1116581e-70b2-4674-89bc-30ba0e547e5d/>.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Kinsley, 'Dukakis Doctrine Travel the Road to Rio,' *The Daily Sentinel* (May 22, 1988), p. 8. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/539102572/?terms=Dukakis%20doctrine&match=1>

this?’<sup>23</sup> Though there were polls taken in mid-1988 indicating Dukakis was ahead of Bush in his foreign policy stances, Bush won the 1988 election in what was the last landslide victory for an American president.<sup>24</sup>

Bush won 426 electoral votes and, as Chase Untermeyer stated to the author: ‘This was the first time in sixty years that a political party in the United States won a third consecutive term without a death or resignation.’<sup>25</sup> Once victory was achieved, many newspapers throughout the country published a column featuring a letter sent to Bush, in late November 1988, by then Chief Executive Officer of the Chrysler Corporation, Lee Iacocca. Iacocca declared that America could not afford to run another cumulative trade deficit as it had in the 1980s and thus pondered,

You know, George, every president needs a “doctrine.” Truman had one, Eisenhower had one. I’ve always liked Mr. Monroe’s doctrine, the one that told the rest of the world that this part of the planet was ours, so don’t push too far. Why don’t you announce the “Bush Doctrine” on trade? One strong sentence will do.<sup>26</sup>

Iacocca suggested the definition of the Bush doctrine should be, since the U.S. economy could not be maintained without a reasonable balance of trade, that America reserves ‘the

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<sup>23</sup> Kinsley, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> E.J. Dionne, ‘Poll Shows Dukakis Leads Bush; Many Reagan Backers Shift Sides,’ *The New York Times* (May 17, 1988) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/05/17/us/poll-shows-dukakis-leads-bush-many-reagan-backers-shift-sides.html>; Willie Horton 1988 Attack Ad (1988) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io9KMSSEZ0Y>. The most famous example of the Bush campaign making Dukakis appear weak and naïve was through the financing of the Willie Horton television ad which discredited Dukakis’ governorship for allowing criminals in prison for life to have free weekend passes.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Lee Iacocca, ‘Stop Hemorrhage of Red Ink and ’92 is Yours, George,’ *The Kansas City Times* (November 22, 1988), p. 47. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/681015012/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>, p. 47; also published in: Lee Iacocca, ‘A Letter to George Bush,’ *The Herald-Sun* (November 20, 1988), p. 58. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/788659659/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>; Lee Iacocca, ‘Iacocca to Bush: Time for Some Compromises,’ *Standard-Speaker* (November 21, 1988), p. 22. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/63119560/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

right to determine and enforce the acceptable limit of penetration of the American market by any nation that does not assure reciprocal American penetration of that nation's home market.'<sup>27</sup> Bush's endorsement of this policy as his doctrine would have been beneficial for Iacocca's business interests and the influential C.E.O. of one of America's most recognisable automobile brands was seeking to nudge Bush's trade policy to align with the former's business interests. Thereby further illuminating on both wider demands of those sympathetic to Bush to have him define himself as his own man, but also that those who seek to advance a set of policy choices will frame them as a doctrine in an attempt to confer further legitimacy upon those choices.

However, as Vice President Dan Quayle later recalled, the theatrics of politics ran against Bush's nature, and he 'gave the job his best and expected people to notice...Politics doesn't always reward modesty, however – one lesson of 1992.'<sup>28</sup> Bush's insistence on confronting the problem which laid before him and communicating that problem and its solution on their merits was both a recipe for his disassociation and rejection of doctrine in the crudest sense, as exemplified by his not following Iacocca's advice and his aforementioned equivocation on the question what he would like to become known as the Bush doctrine. It was also what has led others to associate his leadership with *realpolitik*; a type of politics defined by practical rather than moral or ideological considerations.<sup>29</sup>

In this light, Untermeyer conveyed to the author how Bush viewed his and America's role in the world at this critical moment in history:

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<sup>27</sup> Iacocca, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Dan Quayle, "George Bush: 'Be Prepared and Be Loyal,'" *Wall Street Journal Opinion* (December 1, 2018) - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/george-bush-be-prepared-and-be-loyal-1543674594>

<sup>29</sup> Peter Baker, 'Obama Puts His Own Mark on Foreign Policy Issues,' *The New York Times* (April 13, 2010) - <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/14/world/14prexy.html>. Rahm Emanuel, Barack Obama's chief of staff, remarked in 2010 that if one had to put Obama in a category, 'he's probably more *realpolitik*, like Bush 41, the first President George Bush.'

He was not ever an ideologue. He had basic beliefs that we can call conservative in the sense traditional conservatives have in the United States; of a belief of an America that has a strong and important role to play in the world that must be, therefore, prepared both militarily and diplomatically to perform that role...And it's not that he was tormented by questions of foreign policy theory that various professors might have propounded. It's not that he applied a label to himself. He would probably be complimented if he were to be called "pragmatic." But if you were to ask him at any stage of his career whether he was a believer in realpolitik, he probably wouldn't know immediately what you were talking about let alone other theories.<sup>30</sup>

This first-hand account from someone who knew Bush provides a unique insight into Bush's public leadership over foreign policy matters. Bush came to the office with a wealth of foreign policy experience; he served as ambassador to the United Nations, ambassador to China, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and as vice president to Reagan. In turn, he believed in applying that experience to the matters at hand and legitimizing his decisions not through moralistic language or grandiosity but through reason, pragmatism, and successful and skilful diplomacy.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Bush Doctrine and the Articulation of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy**

In terms of leadership style, Bush did not possess the charisma of Reagan but sought to assert much more control over his staff than had his former boss.<sup>32</sup> John Sununu, Bush's chief of staff, said that though Reagan and Bush had similar ideas about the moral necessity for

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Zelikow & Condoleezza Rice, *To Build a Better World: Choices to End the Cold War and Create a Global Commonwealth* (California: Twelve, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Lewis Gould, *The Modern American Presidency* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2009), p. 205.

American global leadership, Reagan's leadership was more thematic whereas Bush was more results driven.<sup>33</sup> Bush's communications director, David Demarest, once said that to understand Bush's public strategy 'one had to start from the standpoint that President Bush did not like the message managed.'<sup>34</sup> In this way, Richard Haas, who served as a staffer on Bush's National Security Council, remarked that though Bush's leadership will be remembered well for executing the transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War world, but where 'I predict the marks won't be as high is, he did not do enough to articulate a post-Cold War foreign policy strategy.'<sup>35</sup>

Whereas the subsequent subsection will show that the administration did frequently deliberate about how to articulate America's post-Cold War foreign policy, which on two known occasions led to suggestions of utilizing the label 'Bush doctrine,' Untermeyer provided a counterargument to such critiques when he said that Bush was not troubled by 'academic or intellectual interpretations of foreign policy. He just relied upon his experience.'<sup>36</sup> Further, Untermeyer posited, 'I think it is fair to say, no criticism to him for not being a deep student of foreign policy theory, that he adopted, accepted, and expanded what came out of the Reagan administration in response to the dramatic events that occurred on his watch.'<sup>37</sup> In this light, Goddard and Krebs argued that 'from a legitimization perspective, there is much more continuity than change between Cold War and post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy...liberal legitimization made post-Cold War strategy of primacy palatable both

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<sup>33</sup> 'The Legacy of the George H.W. Bush Administration,' *Council on Foreign Relations* (February 17, 2016) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvTbAwyc0w>. Approx. seven minutes into the video.

<sup>34</sup> Lori Cox Han, *A Presidency Upstaged: The Public Leadership of George H.W. Bush* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, 'George H.W. Bush Oral History Project. Transcript: Interview with Richard Haas.' March 27, 2004, New York, N.Y., with Stephen F. Knott & Robert Strong, p. 68. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/richard-haas-oral-history>.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024.

at home and abroad.’<sup>38</sup> It did so by justifying the primacy of institutions dedicated to spearheading a world order led by the U.S., such as NATO, in terms which framed them as motivated by liberal principles such as democracy and free markets.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, during the early period of the first Bush administration, how to communicate this emerging American global primacy led to spirited disagreements.

### To Label or Not to Label: The ‘Bush Doctrine’

There were vibrant debates inside the administration about what to label the administration’s initiatives in navigating the new post-Cold War era. Bush’s Deputy Assistant for Policy Planning, James Pinkerton, would later state that the phrases and labels buzzing around at differing moments throughout the presidency ‘was just light years away from the way Bush – that was the way we talked, it wasn’t the way Bush talked, and it was a tribute to our isolation from genuine influence that we would come up with a bunch of language that Bush was just incapable of.’<sup>40</sup> Similarly, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft once said in an interview that Bush ‘rejected fancy phraseology.’<sup>41</sup> Demarest recognized that it was a mistake to equate speechwriting with communications in the Bush presidency.<sup>42</sup> During an interview in 2011, Demarest said that the public assess a president’s leadership like ‘a mosaic that

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<sup>38</sup> Stacie E. Goddard & Ronald R. Krebs, ‘Chapter 7: Legitimizing Primacy After the Cold War: How Liberal Talk Matters to US Foreign Policy,’ in Nuno P. Monteiro and Fritz Barte, *Before and After the Fall: World Politics and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 132.

<sup>39</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘George H.W. Bush Oral History Project. Transcript: Interview with James Pinkerton.’ February 6, 2001, Washington, D.C., with Sidney M Milkis & Russell Riley, p. 97. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/james-p-pinkerton-oral-history>

<sup>41</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘George H.W. Bush Oral History Project. Transcript: Interview with Brent Scowcroft.’ November 12-13, 1999, Washington D.C., with Philip Zelikow, Ernest May, & James H. McCall, p. 53. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/brent-scowcroft-oral-history-part-i>

<sup>42</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘George H.W. Bush Oral History Project. Transcript: Interview with David F. Demarest, Jr.’ January 28, 2010, Charlottesville, Virginia., with Russell Riley, Paul Martin, & Charles Walcott, pp. 61-62. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/david-f-demarest-jr-oral-history>

combines lots of different inputs.’<sup>43</sup> Those include how a president comports himself through a formal speech, interacting with reporters, and how the White House behaves.<sup>44</sup> One of the issues Bush faced was that he was relatively passive when it came to the speech process and largely took what came to him. This came out of a process where people were contributing an amalgamation of inputs which made that process fatal to big ideas.<sup>45</sup> Bill Kristol recalled in an interview for this study that whilst he was serving in the Bush administration, there were often disputes about what would be included in Bush’s speeches.<sup>46</sup> On certain occasions, these disputes centered around the official endorsement of a Bush doctrine.

Philip Zelikow, an official in Bush’s administration, observed that beginning in March 1989 and continuing through 1990, ‘the U.S. government chose, as its basic goal, to support change and fashion a new international system.’<sup>47</sup> This was first made clear in Bush’s *National Security Review-12* which he issued on March 3, 1989.<sup>48</sup> Its purposes was to reassess America’s basic national defense strategy in light of the success of containment arising out of which were a ‘new set of challenges and uncertainties.’<sup>49</sup> William Antholis, who served in the Dukakis-Bentsen campaign staff, and later in the National Security Council under Bill Clinton, stated in an interview for this study that the Bush administration did not associate with a doctrine, but rather a broad framework defined by the end of the Cold War.<sup>50</sup> James Boys wrote that although Bush claimed America could provide the necessary

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<sup>43</sup> Miller Center interview with David F. Demarest, Jr.,’ pp. 61-62.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 59. Demarest reflected that in a speechwriting operation, ‘you want power and gravitas and news and you want a speech to convey a crisp, clear set of messages and actions [...] The process forces compromises that are political compromises.’

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Philip Zelikow, ‘Chapter 6: U.S. Strategic Planning in 2001-02,’ in Melvyn P. Leffler & Jeffrey W. Legro, *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 96.

<sup>48</sup> The White House, *National Security Review-12*. Subject: Review of National Defense Strategy. *George H.W. Bush Presidential Library* (Washington D.C., March 3, 1989). - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsr/nsr12.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> The White House, *National Security Review-12*, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with William Antholis, March 7, 2023.

leadership in the changing world, ‘no Bush doctrine or grand design existed for meeting the collective security needs of the new world order.’<sup>51</sup> Heiko Meiertons argued that no American official labelled a concept, or statement, as the ‘Bush doctrine.’<sup>52</sup> These claims are, however, incorrect.

The administration did seek to forge a grand strategy for the post-Cold War world, and it has been documented that officials did use this label. For example, White House Chief of Staff, John Sununu, declared in January 1989 that ‘the birth of the Bush Doctrine was at the President’s inauguration when Bush, after speaking of conciliation with Congress, also said he was extending his hand to other nations.’<sup>53</sup> By extending a hand, this referred to the goal to make Europe whole again by trying to wean countries out of the communist bloc.<sup>54</sup> Sununu claimed in his memoir that Bush came into office with a clear vision of what he wanted to accomplish for the country and how he wanted to do it.<sup>55</sup> David Demarest did not recall John Sununu’s defining Bush’s desire to reunify Europe as the Bush doctrine.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, implying this may have been an off-the-cuff remark. Nonetheless, this was not the first instance when an administration official wanted to label a presidential statement and policy practices as the Bush doctrine.

In April 1989, Bush spoke in Michigan about the imposed and unnatural division of Europe and pledged further economic and political reforms which would also bring new American trade and credits.<sup>57</sup> Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott wrote that Sununu had

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<sup>51</sup> James D. Boys, *Clinton’s Grand Strategy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 265.

<sup>52</sup> Heiko Meiertons, *The Doctrines of U.S. Security Policy: An Evaluation under International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 178.

<sup>53</sup> Timothy J. McNulty, ‘Making Europe Whole,’ *Chicago Tribune* (July 16, 1989), p. 57. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/389309501/?terms=Timothy%20McNulty%20Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>54</sup> McNulty, p. 57.

<sup>55</sup> John Sununu, *The Quiet Man: The Indispensable Presidency of George H.W. Bush* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with David Demarest, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

<sup>57</sup> ‘MT249A Address Citizens of Hamtramck, MI; 17 April 1989,’ *George Bush Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOEmVN4fV0>. At 8 minutes and 55 seconds into the speech, Bush declared that, ‘The United States, and let’s be clear on this, has never accepted the legitimacy of Europe’s division. We accept no spheres of influence that denies the sovereign rights of nations.’

‘wanted to call this the Bush Doctrine, but Scowcroft had scotched the idea, saying that while it was up to presidents to make policy, it should be left to others to name doctrines after them.’<sup>58</sup> Similarly, when White House Staff Secretary James Cicconi and Demarest wondered whether the ‘beyond containment’ phrase, introduced in *National Security Decision Directive 23* regarding a policy that actively promoted the integration of the Soviet Union into the existing international system, ‘might be advertized as a Bush Doctrine. Scowcroft shook his head. Once again, he said that presidents should not name doctrines after themselves: let the press confer such labels.’<sup>59</sup> Scowcroft’s reasoning was that once the label was trotted out it would be very hard to walk back if circumstances and events necessitated a differing response.<sup>60</sup> Such a response reflects the critical issue of this thesis which is that presidential doctrines, whether or not an administration endorses it as such or however they are defined by agents in the press, make presidents susceptible to charges of inconsistency if they act contrarily to its popularly understood definition.

John Mueller argued that ‘some in the administration were disappointed in their hopes that the press would grasp the importance of the message Bush was trying to deliver and dub it the “Bush Doctrine.”’<sup>61</sup> However, *The Guardian*, in July 1989, reported that the president’s trip to Europe was made to rally industrial nations ‘around what his aides are dubbing the “Bush Doctrine.” This is based on the principle of targeting Western aid to promote and reward development of political pluralism and free market economies in China and the Soviet bloc.’<sup>62</sup> Whereas Scowcroft was a highly influential player in the administration, spending as long as four hours with the president on an average day as ‘the president’s close and constant

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<sup>58</sup> Michael Beschloss & Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1994), p. 54.

<sup>59</sup> Beschloss & Talbott, p. 70; The White House, *National Security Directive 23* (Washington D.C., September 22, 1989) - <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsd/nsd23.pdf>, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Beschloss & Talbott, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> John Mueller, ‘What Was the Cold War About? Evidence from Its Ending,’ *Political Science Quarterly* 119:4 (2004/5), 609-631 (p. 618).

<sup>62</sup> Martin Walker, ‘Bush Calls for Action on Communist Crisis,’ *The Guardian* (July 14, 1989) - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/260244003/?terms=Bush%20Doctrine&match=1>, p. 10.

confidant,' his instruction to let the press confer a doctrine upon the administration's policy initiatives went unheeded by other aides who decided to declare statements as such to the press.<sup>63</sup> This throws new light on Scowcroft's influence throughout the administration, particularly in the realm of communication.<sup>64</sup> More importantly, what this shows is the rhetorical power that certain actors attribute to presidential doctrines to distinguish a president from what has been before. Elements in the administration were keen on having Bush publicly label initiatives designed to spearhead American global leadership as the Bush doctrine, yet the pragmatic approach to foreign policy mixed with Bush's and Scowcroft's more communicatory humbleness made such language untenable. The significance of this is as the Cold War drew to a close, third-party actors stepped in and defined a Bush doctrine in their own terms.

#### The End of the Cold War: November 1989 – December 1991

On November 9, 1989, nearly a month prior to the Malta Summit between Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev held in December 1989, the Berlin Wall – a symbol of the Cold War division between east and west – fell, paving the way for German reunification in October 1990.<sup>65</sup> To many observers, this signalled that a new era of good relations between east and west was

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<sup>63</sup> Ivo H. Daalder & I. M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), pp. 190-191.

<sup>64</sup> John P Burke, 'The National Security Advisor and Staff: Transition Challenges,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39:2 (2009), p. 293. Scowcroft was the watchdog of the president's political interests as they related to national security matters, and he provided assistance in obtaining political support and a sense of legitimacy for decisions from the Congress and the public.

Robert Gates, 'The Scowcroft Model: An Appreciation,' *Foreign Affairs* (August 13, 2020) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-13/scowcroft-model>. Few officials in American history, Gates wrote, 'have played an influential role in shaping U.S. foreign and national security policy over as long a time as did former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft.'

<sup>65</sup> Robert D. McFadden, 'Camor in the East; The Berlin Wall: A Monument to the Cold War, Triumphs and Tragedies,' *The New York Times* (November 10, 1989) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/11/10/world/camor-east-berlin-wall-monument-cold-war-triumphs-tragedies.html>

approaching.<sup>66</sup> However, during his first telephone call with Margaret Thatcher, Bush stressed caution in approaching the rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup> As it related to the German reunification question, Bush welcomed the East-German government's decision to open the wall.<sup>68</sup> 'Our objective,' Bush stated, 'is a Europe whole and free. Is it a step towards that? I would say yes.'<sup>69</sup> Writing to the president a few days later, Margaret Thatcher argued that the Soviet Union should be reassured that a measured view of the way ahead was being adopted since emotions were aroused on all sides by recent events, and that German reunification was not a matter to be addressed at present.<sup>70</sup> However, Bush endorsed German reunification early on in his presidency, despite the fears of others of a resurgent German nationalism; particularly from the Soviets and the British.<sup>71</sup> Thatcher, who had a close working relationship with Reagan, wrote in her memoir that after Bush won the 1988 election, she was relieved that a Democrat had not won since she felt 'it ensured continuity.'<sup>72</sup> Soon after Bush's assumption of power, Thatcher recalled, she became dismayed since the administration began to see Germany as its main European partner and that she 'could not always rely as before on American cooperation.'<sup>73</sup>

From the years 1989 to 1991, major geopolitical shifts were altering the balance of power in the world, the nature of America's alliances, and thereby reconfiguring the Cold War's national security and grand strategic frameworks.<sup>74</sup> For the leaders of the U.S. and the

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<sup>66</sup> Arnold L. Horelick, 'U.S. – Soviet Relations: The Threshold of a New Era,' *Foreign Affairs* (February 1, 1990) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/1990-02-01/us-soviet-relations-threshold-new-era>

<sup>67</sup> The White House, 'Memorandum of Conversation. Subject: Phone Call Between the President and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain. January 23, 1989.' *George H.W. Bush Presidential Library* - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1989-01-23--Thatcher.pdf>, p. 1.'

<sup>68</sup> 'MT125 Press Statement and Q&A Regarding the Berlin Wall - 09 November 1989,' *George Bush Presidential Library and Museum* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSbi4s5qhqw>

<sup>69</sup> MT125 Press Statement and Q&A Regarding the Berlin Wall.

<sup>70</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 793.

<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey Engel, 'Bush, Germany, and the Power of Time: How History Makes History,' *Diplomatic History* 37:4 (2013), p. 641.

<sup>72</sup> Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p. 768.

<sup>73</sup> Thatcher, p. 768.

<sup>74</sup> The White House, 'Memorandum of Telephone Conversation. Subject: Telephone Call to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany. October 3, 1990.' *George H.W. Bush Presidential Library* - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/select-documents/telcon10-3-90.pdf>

Soviet Union's first meeting at Malta since Bush became president, uncertainty was the theme of the day.<sup>75</sup> Communist regimes throughout eastern Europe were collapsing, the Soviet Union continued reducing its military presence in that region in accordance with Gorbachev's address to the United Nations on December 7, 1988, and, as a consequence, 'American and Soviet policymakers faced the prospect of contentious arms control talks in this fraught environment.'<sup>76</sup> At the summit, Gorbachev questioned Bush over American justifications for interfering in the internal affairs of countries such as Panama, Colombia, and the Philippines.<sup>77</sup> Gorbachev directly told Bush that people in the Soviet Union are asking whether or not it bothers the United States that it is intervening in sovereign nations and why it arranges a trial and reached a verdict carried out by itself. Gorbachev claimed that, 'Some are beginning to speak about the "Bush Doctrine" that is replacing the "Brezhnev Doctrine."'<sup>78</sup> To this, Bush asked whether people 'really say so with regard to the Philippines? I simply cannot understand this. We are talking about the legitimate elected leader. She is asking for help against an insolent colonel.'<sup>79</sup> Gorbachev, in turn, responded: 'I agree. However, I think one can explain such a reaction in the context of the current situation.'

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<sup>75</sup> Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); The Malta Summit's significance is disagreed upon by scholars. Some argue it was central to the end of the Cold War and others criticised it as a missed opportunity – on the part of the Bush administration – for not responding to Soviet arms control initiatives; consequently, avoiding big changes to American policy. For a more positive reading of the Summit, see: Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1994), p. 407; for a more negative view, see: Mary Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 189.

<sup>76</sup> Joshua R. Shiffrin, 'The Malta Summit and US-Soviet Relations: Testing the Waters Amidst Stormy Seas,' The Wilson Center, part of the CWIHP- E-Dossier Series - <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-malta-summit-and-us-soviet-relations-testing-the-waters-amidst-stormy-seas>; 'Address by Mikhail Gorbachev at the U.N. General Assembly Session,' December 7, 1988. *The Wilson Center Digital Archive* - <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/address-mikhail-gorbachev-un-general-assembly-session-excerpts>.

<sup>77</sup> 'Soviet Transcript of the Malta Summit,' December 2-3, 1989. First Plenary Session, December 2. *The National Security Archive, George Washington University*, p. 16. - <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB298/Document%2010.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> 'Soviet Transcript of the Malta Summit,' p. 16.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 16; Bush & Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 165. In Bush's memoir, *A World Transformed*, Bush mentioned this exchange and wrote that 'I reminded him that the Philippines was a democracy asking for help.'

Just take a look; Europe is changing; governments are falling – governments that were also elected on a legitimate basis.’<sup>80</sup>

This exchange is significant because it highlights Soviet anxiety during this period about the changes occurring in Europe which were diminishing their global influence and conversely augmenting America’s. In his attempt to scrutinize American foreign policy and Bush’s leadership over it, at this juncture, Gorbachev – as the previous chapter showed he had done during a meeting with Thatcher – charged a U.S. president with executing a doctrine that was aggressive and hegemonic in nature. Despite Soviet fears, Secretary of State James Baker assured Gorbachev, in a meeting on February 9, 1990, not one inch eastward regarding NATO expansion.<sup>81</sup> An expansion of the organization did, nonetheless, occur with German reunification on October 3, 1990, when the former East Germany became part of the Federal Republic of Germany and, consequently, of the alliance. As Sarotte argued, though Gorbachev did let his part of Germany go, along the way Washington rethought its options, particularly after the Soviet Union’s collapse in December 1991, as the U.S. realized it ‘could not only win big, but win bigger. Not one inch of territory need be off-limits to NATO.’<sup>82</sup> Further, ‘liberal legitimating language bolstered the proponents of NATO expansion, clearing the path for expansionist policies.’<sup>83</sup>

For example, according to the administration’s March 1990 *National Security Strategy*, America sought the reintegration of its former foes into the international system ‘to provide a shield behind which democracy could flourish,’ as it had after World War II, now it had successfully contained an aggressive Soviet Union.<sup>84</sup> The March 1990 *National Security*

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>81</sup> Mary Sarotte, *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Sarotte, pp. 1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Goddard & Krebs, ‘Chapter 7: Legitimizing Primacy After the Cold War,’ p. 132.

<sup>84</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington D.C., March 1990), p. v. - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/select-documents/National%20Security%20Strategy%20Report%201990.pdf>

*Strategy* acknowledged that the security environment of the 1990s was more hopeful and that one of the questions which needed to be addressed was: ‘While maintaining a balance of power with the Soviet Union is an inescapable American priority, how do we adapt our forces for the continuing challenge of contingencies elsewhere in the world?’<sup>85</sup> ‘Our goal,’ the document read, ‘is to move beyond containment, to seek the integration of the Soviet Union into the international system as a constructive partner. For the first time in the post-war period, this goal appears in reach.’<sup>86</sup> Consequently, to communicate the momentous events occurring between November 1989 and December 1991, phrases framed around liberal internationalist ideals, such as the ‘new world order’ of multilateral cooperation and interdependence, as well as ‘Europe whole and free,’ were being deployed.<sup>87</sup> President Bush declared to Congress on September 11, 1990, that,

A new partnership of nations has begun, and we stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective – a new world order – can emerge.<sup>88</sup>

William Safire, in one of his ‘On Language’ essays for *The New York Times*, noted that for the first time, ‘the leaders of both superpowers were pushing the same phrase’ since in April 1990, Gorbachev had also used it when he said that, ‘We are only at the beginning of the

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<sup>85</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, p. 8. -

<sup>86</sup> The White House, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Verbatim Record of the North Atlantic Council Meeting with the Participation of Heads of State and Government held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1990 at Lancaster House, London,’ *NATO Online Archives* - [https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/2/1/217013/C-VR\\_90\\_36-PART1\\_ENG\\_NHQP1644626.pdf](https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/2/1/217013/C-VR_90_36-PART1_ENG_NHQP1644626.pdf); William Safire, ‘On Language; The New, New World Order,’ *The New York Times Magazine* (February 17, 1991) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/17/magazine/on-language-the-new-new-world-order.html>

<sup>88</sup> The Washington Post, ‘Bush: Out of These Troubled Times...A New World Order,’ (September 11, 1990) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1990/09/12/bush-out-of-these-troubled-times-a-new-world-order/b93b5cf1-e389-4e6a-84b0-85f71bf4c946/>

process of shaping a new world order.’<sup>89</sup> Although the two leaders were sometimes in-sync in some of their rhetoric, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, posed the first test for post-Cold War superpower cooperation.<sup>90</sup>

The Soviet Union and America joined in condemning what they called ‘the brutal and illegal invasion of Kuwait.’<sup>91</sup> On August 25, Gorbachev conversed with Turgut Ozal, the president of Turkey, and said that he was concerned about what is happening in the Persian Gulf region and that the ‘dangerous and adventurous policies being pursued there could have very dire consequences for all of us.’<sup>92</sup> On January 15, 1991, Bush issued *National Security Directive-54* which acknowledged that economic sanctions on Iraq have not accomplished the intended objective of ending Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait.<sup>93</sup> As a consequence, Bush authorized military action to bring about Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait.<sup>94</sup> Since Saddam failed to comply with multiple United Nations resolutions urging him to withdraw his troops from Kuwait, Operation Desert Storm, a massive air campaign to strike and eliminate Iraqi targets, was launched on January 17, 1991. With the incorporation of a ground campaign, launched in late February 1991, Kuwait was eventually liberated with Iraq’s troops expelled.<sup>95</sup>

After the successful conclusion of the war, Bush had an approval rating of 89%.<sup>96</sup> If legitimacy is largely contingent upon a broad consensus on actions undertaken, Bush’s

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<sup>89</sup> Safire, ‘On Language; The New, New World Order.’

<sup>90</sup> National Security Archive, ‘Inside the Gorbachev-Bush “Partnership” on the First Gulf War 1990,’ - <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2020-09-09/inside-gorbachev-bush-partnership-first-gulf-war-1990>

<sup>91</sup> Bill Keller, ‘The Iraqi Invasion; Moscow Joins U.S. In Criticizing Iraq,’ *The New York Times* (August 4, 1990) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/08/04/world/the-iraqi-invasion-moscow-joins-us-in-criticizing-iraq.html>

<sup>92</sup> ‘Gorbachev memcon with Turkish President Turgut Ozal, Moscow, August 25, 1990,’ *National Security Archive*, pp. 1-2. - <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/24313-gorbachev-memcon-turkish-president-turgut-ozal-moscow-august-25-1990>

<sup>93</sup> The White House, National Security Decision Directive-54 (Washington D.C., January 15, 1991). *The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library*, p. 1. - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsd/nsd54.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> The White House, National Security Decision Directive-54,’ p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Helfont, ‘The Gulf War’s Afterlife: Dilemmas, Missed Opportunities, and the Post-Cold War Order Undone,’ *Texas National Security Review* 4:2 (2021), 25-47.

<sup>96</sup> George H.W. Bush Public Approval/Disapproval (Gallup Data), 28/02/1991. *The American Presidency Project* - <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/data/george-bush-public-approval>

leadership authority was bolstered throughout this initial period after the conflict.<sup>97</sup> In this light, Robert Wellock, of the *Concord Monitor*, wrote on January 15, 1991, that ‘President Bush has a marvellous opportunity to be recognized by history as one of the great presidents of our country. The gulf crisis presents a chance for him to define the framework for maintaining world peace well into the next century.’<sup>98</sup> Further, as Truman is remembered for the Truman doctrine, which contained the spread of communism for almost 50 years, Bush can be remembered for the Bush doctrine: ‘Unite the world against aggression, impose and enforce sanctions on offending nations, assemble a force to back up the expressed will of the United Nations and of the American people.’<sup>99</sup> There was, consequently, an opportunity for Bush to define the narrative of his effective leadership over the Gulf crisis, and the paradigm being established during its management, after himself.<sup>100</sup> For Wellock, the codification, and elevation, of these policy practices into a Bush doctrine was his suggestion for Bush to further legitimize the framework he had established, during the crisis, for how to maintain peace as the United States moved into the next century; thereby signalling a clear departure from the Cold War since the liberation of Kuwait was very much driven by the United States and conducted on its own terms.<sup>101</sup>

The former head of the Council on Foreign Relations, Leslie Gelb, criticized this practice of conferring doctrines in the *Miami Herald*, on March 20, 1991, when he said that Americans tend to transform successes and failures in foreign affairs into a ‘doctrine and political cudgel. We refuse to rest until we possess one lens through which to view the world

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<sup>97</sup> Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Massachusetts: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Wellock, ‘The Bush Doctrine: The Power of Peace,’ *Concord Monitor* (January 15, 1991), p. 11. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/925234924/?terms=Bush%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>99</sup> Wellock, ‘The Bush Doctrine,’ p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> Brigitte Lebens Nacos, ‘Presidential Leadership During the Persian Gulf Conflict,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24: 3 (1994), pp. 543-561. Nacos argued that Bush’s ‘crisis management during the Persian Gulf crisis had its strengths, especially in the international realm, but also its weaknesses with respect to maintaining public and elite backing at home.’

<sup>101</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Unipolar Moment,’ *Foreign Affairs* (January 1, 1990) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1990-01-01/unipolar-moment>.

and one answer for all challenges.’<sup>102</sup> Gelb continued to say that there is a history of taking unique events, such as the Korean War, ‘and elevating their purported lessons into policy dogmas...Once enshrined, high priests wield these theologies as clubs to destroy their political adversaries.’<sup>103</sup> Gelb criticized how various commentators were leading American foreign policy to new dogmas, with their frequent discussion of a Bush doctrine, to a single answer as to how to be the world’s policeman in this new world where America now served as the preponderant power. These high priests, whether that be politicians or commentators, were seeking to make the Iraq experience the rule whereas, Gelb argued, America did ‘not need a single new truth; it needs many – with the wisdom and courage to choose among them.’<sup>104</sup> Wellock’s and Gelb’s pieces are of significance for two principal reasons pertaining to the argument of this thesis.

Firstly, Gelb recognized how many in political discourse were seeking to construct Bush’s policy choices into a dogma to be labelled as the ‘Bush doctrine’ within a context of making a general point about the common practice of constructing doctrines in the discourse of American foreign policy. The purpose of this practice, Gelb asserted, is to wield that doctrine, and the lessons it purportedly embodies, as a political cudgel. Thus, implying that through constructing those policy options into a dogma and a single truth, undermines the ability to choose, or justify choices. It is within this dynamic where the presidential doctrine’s susceptibility to charges of inconsistency between statement and practice becomes visible; thereby potentially undermining the legitimization of policy choices. Secondly, despite Gelb’s critique being agreed upon by many, as proven by comments made to the author in various

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<sup>102</sup> Leslie Gelb, ‘New World Order or Law and Order: The Bush Doctrine Sees U.S. As World Policeman,’ *The Miami Herald* (March 20, 1991), p. 143. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/635585965/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>. ‘We are,’ Gelb wrote, ‘forever brushing off small-but-important lessons in the quest for great-and-single truths.’

<sup>103</sup> Gelb, p. 143. Gelb wrote that, ‘We are the monotheists of world politics. Yet we keep abandoning one God for another with unholy frequency.’

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

oral history interviews showcased thus far, friendly commentators in the media will still nevertheless seek to both impose and codify a doctrine upon a set of policy practices and statements and wish that the president would do so themselves. Arguing whether or not Bush, in the case of the first Gulf War, acted according to a *doctrine* returns us back to the semantics over the definition of that term. What can be said with certainty is that the vibrant debates over the existence of a Bush doctrine, and the need for Bush to endorse and define his own doctrine, created a space whereby others offered their definitions. They did so in ways which either rationalized a set of choices with which the agent sought to advance or to scrutinize the bases upon which decisions were made.

### Bush Doctrines at the End of History

Conservative writer, Charles Krauthammer, famously wrote on the January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990 in *Foreign Affairs* that the Soviets were ‘calling off the Cold War’ and, as a consequence, the ‘most striking feature of the post-Cold War world is its unipolarity.’<sup>105</sup> According to Krauthammer, this ‘leaves us with the true geopolitical structure of the post-Cold War world, brought sharply into focus by the Gulf crisis: a single pole of world power that consists of the United States at the apex of the industrial West.’<sup>106</sup> In August 1991, hard-line communists had attempted a coup against Gorbachev which further weakened the Soviet government which was already losing its grip on power due to Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika reforms.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Krauthammer, ‘The Unipolar Moment.’

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Document 256. ‘From an address by Ivan K. Polozkov, First Secretary of the C.C. of the C.P. of the R.S.F.S.R., to a joint plenary meeting of the C.C and C.C.C. of the C.P.S.U. January 1991,’ in Edward Action & Tom Stableford, *The Soviet Union: A Documentary History Volume 2, 1939-1991* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press), p. 435. Polozkov declared that, ‘It is now clear to everybody that perestroika, conceived and launched by the Party and people in 1985 to renew socialism [...] extend democracy and improve the people’s welfare has not taken place.’

One of the fundamental ways in which Bush reconfigured U.S. grand strategy around this time was through his Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (P.N.I.).<sup>108</sup> This was part of an effort by Washington and Moscow to substantially limit and reduce their nuclear weaponry; ‘most notably their tactical or battlefield nuclear weapons, such as artillery shells.’<sup>109</sup> Then Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gates described how in the wake of the attempted coup against Gorbachev in August, Bush proposed a whole new series of initiatives to reduce arms further.<sup>110</sup> During a National Security Council meeting in early September, Bush concluded by urging a ‘dramatic statement’ of initiatives ‘that would give the United States the offence in global perceptions of the changes under way. An intensive effort to develop such initiatives culminated three weeks later in a presidential address to the nation.’<sup>111</sup>

In announcing elements of these initiatives to the press on September 28, 1991, Secretary Cheney declared that he had signed an Executive Order taking America’s strategic bomber force off alert status for the first time since 1957.<sup>112</sup> The previous evening, Bush told the nation that new leaders in the Kremlin and across the Soviet republics were beginning to question the value of maintaining their massive nuclear arsenal.<sup>113</sup> He noted that the Soviet Union’s stockpile of nuclear weapons was starting to be seen less as a tool for national security and more as a liability. Because of this shift, Bush said, there was an unprecedented chance to reshape the nuclear policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union. By

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<sup>108</sup> Susan Koch, ‘The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992,’ *Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction National Defense University* (September 2012) -

[https://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/documents/casestudies/cswmd\\_casestudy-5.pdf](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/documents/casestudies/cswmd_casestudy-5.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> Daryl Kimball, ‘The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) on Tactical Nuclear Weapons at a Glance,’ *Arms Control Association* - <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/pniglance>

<sup>110</sup> Koch, p. 4.

<sup>111</sup> Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 529-530; For a study into the influence of presidential leadership in determining the direction of non-proliferation policy, see: Walton L. Brown, ‘Presidential Leadership and U.S. Non-proliferation Policy,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24:3 (1994), pp. 563-575.

<sup>112</sup> Press Conference by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, DC, September 28, 1991 - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?21624-1/nuclear-weapons-reductions>

<sup>113</sup> September 27, 1991 NBC News Special Report (Nuclear Weapons Reduction/Pres. George H.W. Bush) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7h3Razthc0>

taking appropriate actions – individually and together – both countries could significantly reduce their nuclear weapons and place greater emphasis on defensive strategies in their strategic relationship.<sup>114</sup>

While some observers in the American press discerned from these initiatives and statements that a new doctrine for dealing with the Soviet Union was forming, which Michael Krepon in the *Los Angeles Times* posited was a Bush doctrine defined more by discarded items about what no longer had strategic purpose in American policy toward the Soviet Union than new stirring goals, in the U.S.S.R. itself Gorbachev's reforms weakened central control.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, independence movements pushed for greater autonomy and gained momentum which, in Russia, eventually led to Boris Yeltsin, then president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, to declare sovereignty for the Russian Federation. Combined with a strained and stagnating economy, and other republics declaring independence, the dissolution of the Soviet Union occurred in December 1991.<sup>116</sup> Such an historical development transformed the course of history because it 'ended the preceding historical paradigms, such that what followed was no longer the natural progression of a previous model, but the sequential unfolding of a new model created by the event.'<sup>117</sup>

In 1992, Francis Fukuyama published his book *The End of History and the Last Man*.<sup>118</sup> Fukuyama argued that with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent ascendancy of liberal democracy, humanity had reached the end of history; the end point of mankind's ideological evolution with the universalization of liberal democracy as the last

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<sup>114</sup> September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1991 NBC News Special Report (Nuclear Weapons Reduction/Pres. George H.W. Bush) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7h3Razthc0>

<sup>115</sup> Michael Krepon, 'Bush States His Doctrine by Omission,' *Los Angeles Times* (October 6, 1991) - <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-10-06-op-5-story.html>

<sup>116</sup> Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Robert D. English, 'Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End,' *International Security* 26 (2002), 70–92; Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War," *International Security* 25 (2000/01), 5–53; Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>117</sup> Wang Hui, *China's Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 55.

<sup>118</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

form of human government after the defeat of the twentieth century's two other principal political ideologies: fascism and communism. 1992 was thus a pivotal year as it pertains to the historical scope of this thesis since it was the first year during which the Soviet Union no longer existed.<sup>119</sup> During a March 1992 speech which Bush gave at the Nixon Library, he declared that the United States had won the Cold War and the question that now must be addressed is whether the United States was prepared to secure the peace.<sup>120</sup> During an interview for this study, William Antholis claimed that the emergence of the democratic peace theory started to take hold by proponents within Bush's Policy Planning Office and that 'a number of things had changed including a full revolution including the collapse of the Soviet Union and elections in Russia.'<sup>121</sup> Bush's Director of Policy Planning, Dennis Ross, once remarked that he wanted the Policy Planning Staff to 'be able to think more strategically than the rest of the bureaucracy, because the rest of the building on a day-to-day basis has to answer the daily cables, but I didn't want them to be so removed from operational sensibilities that what they were doing would seem irrelevant.'<sup>122</sup> Despite claims that Bush found issue with the vision thing, the administration made a concerted attempt to establish a potential vision for the future which laid out what America's role would be in the post-Cold War, unipolar world.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> James W. Caesar & Andrew Busch, *Upside Down and Inside Out: The 1992 Elections and American Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Maryland, 1993), p. 1. Bill Clinton, in July 1992, said that, "George Bush is wrong about most things, but he is right when said this a 'weird year.'"

<sup>120</sup> Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George H.W. Bush (1992, Book I), *Budget and Presidential Materials*, March 11, 1992, p. 430.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with William Antholis, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023. For a comprehensive study into democratic peace theory, see: Karen Rasler & William R. Thompson, *Puzzles of the Democratic Peace: Theory, Geopolitics, and the Transformation of World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 3 This theory holds that democracies do not fight other democracies, and this has come to be regarded 'as a law-like cornerstone of knowledge about international politics.'

<sup>122</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, 'George H.W. Bush Oral History Project, Transcript: Interview with Dennis Ross, August 2, 2001. Washington D.C.,' with Philip Zelikow & William B. Quandt, p. 17. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/dennis-b-ross-oral-history>

<sup>123</sup> 'Remarks at the International Conference on Humanitarian Assistance to the Former U.S.S.R., 1992-01-22,' Public Papers, *George H.W. Bush Presidential Library* - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/3864>

The most infamous of such plans was the ‘Defense Planning Guidance, FY 1994-1999’ (dated February 18, 1992).<sup>124</sup> This document was co-authored by Paul Wolfowitz and Scooter Libby – two lower officials in the first Bush administration who would come to wield significant influence in the second Bush administration – and was leaked to *The New York Times* on March 7.<sup>125</sup> The document stated that, ‘U.S. leadership, essential for the successful resolution of the Cold War, remains critical to achieving our long-term goals in this new era.’<sup>126</sup> Moreover, it declared that though the United States will ‘promote the assumption of leadership by others, such as the United Nations or regional organizations,’ it would not ‘ignore the need to be prepared to protect our critical interests and honor our commitments with only limited additional help, or even alone, if necessary.’<sup>127</sup> *The New York Times* reported that the document was not provided to Congress, and its initiatives were developed in conjunction with the National Security Council and in consultation with the president.<sup>128</sup> Dick Cheney, then Secretary of Defense, wrote in his memoir that this document represented a shift from focus on the global threat of the Soviet Union to planning based on regional threats.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, it ‘was very significant in the way that it addressed critical global strategic shifts and set out a sound basis for the United States to continue to enhance its own security and that of its allies in the years to come.’<sup>130</sup>

Cheney later stated that at the early stages of the Cold War’s end, it was clear that ‘we were going to have to come up with a new package, if you will, new strategy, force structure,

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<sup>124</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Planning: Guidance FY 1994-1999* (Washington D.C., 1992).

<sup>125</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, ‘U.S. Strategy Plan Calls For Insuring No Rivals Develop,’ *The New York Times* (March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1992) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html>

<sup>126</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>128</sup> Tyler.

<sup>129</sup> Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), pp. 235-236.

<sup>130</sup> Cheney, pp. 235-236.

budget, from the standpoint of the Defense Department.’<sup>131</sup> During this period, there were calls in Congress for a large peace dividend with Senator Edward M. Kennedy, for example, proposing to take \$210 billion from the defense budget over seven years and diverting that money to healthcare, education, and job programmes.<sup>132</sup> The leading Democratic presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, said that the document represented ‘one more attempt by Pentagon officials to find an excuse for big budgets instead of downsizing.’<sup>133</sup> Paul Wolfowitz later claimed he did not know what the fuss was about, regarding the controversy over the leaked draft, since it was necessary – he said – for America to maintain the core of its troop deployments overseas and to not let hostile powers dominate regions critical to its interests.<sup>134</sup> The document was rewritten and published in January 1993, shortly before Bush left office.<sup>135</sup> The January 1993 *National Security Strategy* emphasized that America’s victory in the Cold War had ‘fundamentally changed the strategic environment’ as such that it had the opportunity not to simply defend its interests, but actively promote them.<sup>136</sup> One obstacle to this, the document noted, was regional instability and the violence it spawned.<sup>137</sup>

During Bush’s final two years in office, regional instability thus surfaced as an item of concern for American post-Cold War strategic planning. Two significant humanitarian disasters broke out which the U.S. had to manage: the violence stemming from the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia (and the breakaway secessionist movements) and the civil war in Somalia which resulted in a mass famine. Bush initially supported the territorial

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<sup>131</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, ‘George H.W. Bush Oral History Project, Transcript: Interview with Richard B. Cheney, March 16-17, 2000. Dallas, Texas,’ with Philip Zelikow, Tarek E. Masoud, & Richard Betts, p. 89. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/richard-b-cheney-oral-history>

<sup>132</sup> Michael Putzel, ‘Peace Dividend: Demand for it is greater than supply,’ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1992), p. 26. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/643007579/?terms=Peace%20dividend&match=1>

<sup>133</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 211.

<sup>134</sup> Mann, pp. 212-214.

<sup>135</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington D.C., January 1993) - <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/select-documents/National%20Security%20Strategy%20Report%201993.pdf>

<sup>136</sup> The White House, pp. 1-2.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

and political integrity of the former Yugoslavia; which had started to break apart after the collapse of communism in eastern Europe.<sup>138</sup> Baker stated that the European Community should have managed the Yugoslav Wars since America did not have a ‘dog in this fight’ and, in June 1991, declared that America would not recognize secessionist republics.<sup>139</sup> However, the administration became much more involved in the regional conflict after the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian war by securing a United Nations resolution to authorize humanitarian aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina though Bush was hesitant to place big numbers of troops there.<sup>140</sup> Bush’s justification for not becoming too militarily involved was perhaps best articulated during the 1992 presidential debate when he declared that he had learned an important lesson from Vietnam which was not to commit forces until he knew what the mission was and what an exit strategy would look like.<sup>141</sup> Since these elements were not clear, Bush remained cautious as compared to the Gulf War when there was a clearly defined mission and exit strategy. This reasoning led some to charge Bush with making inconsistent decisions.

In June 1992, Jim Hoagland, writing in *The Kansas City Star*, asked why America led the way in reversing aggression in Kuwait but stood aside as a Serbian onslaught took place throughout the ex-Yugoslavia.<sup>142</sup> ‘By the standard of the Bush Doctrine,’ Hoagland wrote, ‘Yugoslavia is too hard. America would have to be prepared for years of involvement...Fight ‘em and forget ‘em is the Pentagon bumper-sticker version of the Bush Doctrine.’<sup>143</sup> In turn,

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<sup>138</sup> Sławomir Lucjan Szczesio, ‘The Policy of the George H.W. Bush Administration Toward Macedonia,’ *Politeja* 11:4 (2014), pp. 227-254.

<sup>139</sup> Don Oberdorfer, ‘A Bloody Failure in the Balkans,’ *Washington Post* (February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1993) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/02/08/a-bloody-failure-in-the-balkans/e19cb4b3-6d9c-444e-b958-a3c271760f45/?noredirect=on>

<sup>140</sup> Thomas H. Henriksen, *America’s Wars: Interventions, Regime Change, and Insurgencies after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>141</sup> ‘Presidential Debate in St. Louis. October 11, 1992,’ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States George H.W. Bush, 1992–1993, vol. II*, p. 1799.

<sup>142</sup> Jim Hoagland, ‘Yugoslavia is Too Hard By Standard of Bush Doctrine,’ *The Kansas City Star* (June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1992), p. 27. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/682353994/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>143</sup> Hoagland, p. 27.

to the degree there was a grand strategic doctrine at the end of the Cold War, which can be discerned from studying Bush's rationale for intervention and non-intervention, it was that there must be a clear exit strategy for when America gets involved in regional conflicts.<sup>144</sup> The discussion of this principle as a potential post-Cold War doctrine would not occur until after the intervention in Somalia, and the Mogadishu raid; a topic dealt with in the next chapter.

In the case of Somalian intervention in late 1992, Richard Clarke – who was involved in the decision to intervene – informed the author in an interview for this study that,

Somalia is fascinating because Bush made the decision to go in after he lost the election. So, it was in many ways a freebie for him. He was told that if he didn't act, 700,000 people would starve to death in the famine in the next six months. And only the United States could stop that. It was a very stark decision the way we framed it. Either you tell us we can do this, or 700,000 people may starve to death. There's nobody else who can do it. The U.N. couldn't. The way we framed it was this is a brief thing; you go in and establish security around the distribution of goods. And the U.N. would come in and takeover. And the U.N. forces would take over the security and we would be out. Six months; in and out.<sup>145</sup>

The decision to intervene was, therefore, driven by a pressing humanitarian crisis: the prospect of hundreds of thousands of people starving to death within a short timeframe.<sup>146</sup>

Though Clarke reinforced the conventional wisdom regarding the decision to intervene in

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<sup>144</sup> George F. Will, 'A Dog in That Fight?' *Newsweek* (June 11, 1995) - <https://www.newsweek.com/dog-fight-183518>. Or, as Baker put it: "We don't have a dog in that fight."

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>146</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2003), p. 240; Robert DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2002), pp. 52–54. Such works purport the intervention was largely motivated because Bush was personally affected by the tragedy.

Somalia based mainly on humanitarian grounds, Stefano Recchia argues that the intervention was largely a pragmatic response to concerns held by the military because the United Nations mission was collapsing and, therefore, American generals were worried about being drawn into the resulting vacuum.<sup>147</sup> This would lead to America having the primary responsibility for dealing with the famine and civil war without a clear exit strategy.<sup>148</sup> Thus, in late 1992, General Colin Powell recommended a massive but ‘temporarily limited U.S. intervention under national command to facilitate the delivery of relief supplies and prevent a wholesale collapse of the U.N. mission...Bush launched a large-scale U.S. intervention that reflected the military’s preferences in December 1992.’<sup>149</sup>

On December 8, 1992, Leslie Gelb pondered whether Bush’s announcement of sending American forces to Somalia to assist during the famine which ‘could assume the dimensions of a Bush Doctrine with unfortunate consequences for Bill Clinton’ because future presidents will be asked why there was intervention in Somalia and not Bosnia, Liberia, and all countries ‘drowning in civil wars and humanitarian disasters.’<sup>150</sup> Gelb wrote that, ‘Doctrines demand consistency over good sense’ as they eliminate choice; either intervention is always called for or it is never permitted.<sup>151</sup> Policies provide general direction and yet allow flexibility on ends and means. Thus, intellectuals, politicians, and journalists, Gelb charged, ‘rob leaders of choice when they consecrate policy as doctrine.’<sup>152</sup> Gelb compared Bush’s announcement to Truman’s speech declaring that American aid would be sent to Greece and Turkey. He again expressed his concern that in the efforts of ideologues and journalists to codify nuanced policy options, they would oversimplify the rationale

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<sup>147</sup> Stefano Recchia, ‘Pragmatism Over Principle: U.S. Intervention and Burden Shifting in Somalia, 1992-1993,’ *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 23:3 (2020), pp. 341-365.

<sup>148</sup> Recchia, p. 342.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>150</sup> Leslie Gelb, ‘Not the Bush Doctrine: Policy Written in Stone Limits Choices in a Messy World,’ *Detroit Free Press* (December 8, 1992), p. 9. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/99335572/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

behind those choices and make it harder for Bush's successor to justify a shift in policy when and if the circumstances required it.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, the broader debate about how America should engage in the post-Cold War world, at the end of the Bush presidency, was being largely informed by agents desiring an official and coherent statement about what American interests were, and how it would fight for those interests, which was never delivered in the style it appeared many commentators and certain officials had wished.<sup>155</sup> At this critical juncture, in between the Cold War and the War on Terror, the presidents of the post-Cold War era's first decade chose pragmatism over doctrine.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored what role the debates over a Bush doctrine played in facilitating and undermining the efforts of the George H.W. Bush administration to legitimize its foreign policy choices. The Bush doctrine, like its doctrinal predecessors and successors, was not a fixed and objective codification of statements and policy practices or a legal entity. Rather, it was a contested concept punctuated mainly by journalists in the national debate about American leadership. From the time Bush was running for president to the internal discussions of his foreign policy when he was president, the administration – aside from remarks made by his officials and the few reports of journalists suggesting otherwise – officially rejected the labelling of statements and policy choices as a doctrine. The main two reasons for this were as follows. Firstly, as Bush's communications director told the author in an interview for this study, it was not Bush's style. Though he was pressed, as a candidate,

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<sup>154</sup> Gelb, p. 9.

<sup>155</sup> Nicholas M. Horrock, 'Pax Americana,' *Chicago Tribune* (December 20, 1992) - <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1992-12-20-9204250538-story.html>. Nicholas Horrock observed on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1992, that Bush's presidential statements and initiatives regarding the fact that American power, leadership, and the nation's conscience would be essential for a peaceful international order 'may well be an early draft of a new doctrine, maybe someday to be called the Bush doctrine.'

what he would like to see become known as the Bush doctrine, his response conveyed a clear desire to evade the question. While some in the administration were keen on labelling statements, principles, and policy practices as the Bush doctrine, such as his chief of staff, staff secretary, and communications director, Scowcroft thought it should be the press who confer doctrines, not the administration.

Secondly, and in this light, whilst it was not Bush's personal style to publicly declare a statement of principle named after himself, an official declaration of a presidential doctrine was judged by certain contemporaries as not conducive to legitimating American global leadership at the dawn of the post-Cold War era as America needed to be able to choose actions freely without being constrained to specific frameworks. Therefore, the administration made and legitimized choices on pragmatic bases. Nevertheless, the administration provided consistent indications about where it sought to move the U.S. on a range of issues in the new world order, including on nuclear defense and its commitment to democracy, and it attempted to forge a coherent grand strategy for how American power should be used in the post-Soviet unipolar world. In this light, it did endorse certain phrases such as 'beyond containment,' 'Europe whole and free,' and 'new world order.' These, however, were broad indicators and permitted a wide remit for the administration to control the definition over its policy choices and what they implied for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War epoch. Bill Clinton also understood the importance of doing this at that moment.

## Chapter 4

### **The Clinton Doctrine and the Legitimation of American Preponderance**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will explore how the rhetorical use of the Clinton doctrine facilitated and undermined the legitimation of Bill Clinton's foreign policy choices throughout his presidency from 1993 to 2001. Recently, scholars have pointed out that Clinton's foreign policy did have more coherence to it despite the arguments made by other scholars and officials, such as Henry Kissinger, who once referred to Clinton's foreign policy as a series of 'unrelated decisions in response to specific crises.'<sup>1</sup> This is despite the fact, as the chapter will argue, that the Clinton administration gave consistent indications about its commitment to what would be called democratic enlargement which tied the administration into global marketization and the Kantian democratic peace theory;<sup>2</sup> the fact that the administration published seven *National Security Strategy* documents and a multitude of presidential decision directives and reviews outlining the grand strategy of democratic enlargement and global engagement; and consistently provided major foreign policy addresses throughout the presidency about America's priorities and responsibilities in the post-Cold War era.<sup>3</sup>

What will thus become clear in this chapter is that the disagreements about the degree of consistency in Clinton's foreign policy stems from the politicking by his political

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<sup>1</sup> John Dumbrell, 'Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton's Foreign Policy Reconsidered,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13:2 (2002), 43-56 (p. 43); James D. Boys, *Clinton's Grand Strategy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015); Patrick J. Maney, *Bill Clinton: New Gilded Age President* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2016); Rajan Menon & William Ruger, 'NATO Enlargement and US Grand Strategy: A New Assessment,' *International Politics* 57:1 (2020), 371-400.

<sup>2</sup> Dumbrell, pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> Boys, p. 267. Clinton's national security adviser, Anthony Lake, commented that: 'a lot of the strategy comes more through presidential speeches than through the documents.'

opponents during the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> In the main, the Clinton administration did not wish to frame its decisions as a doctrine or in any way that could be potentially construed as dogmatic and bound them to act in certain ways even if the circumstances changed.<sup>5</sup> Despite the attempts by some friendly commentators who sought to define a Clinton doctrine in terms which rationalized Clinton's choices, among the doctrines under study Clinton's was mainly definitionally weaponized against his efforts to legitimize his choices by the his opponents to criticize and define his choices in their own terms. On certain occasions, they definitionally associated him with a doctrine that sanctioned being too cautious in deploying American military power. On other occasions, for being too eager to use the military in arenas his opponents saw no national interest. Their main criticism throughout the presidency was that he was not as transparent about the principles guiding his uses of force as his conservative critics in the legislature and the media constantly demanded him to be.

This chapter will be organized into three principal sections. The first section will begin by tracing the first instances when the notion of a Clinton doctrine was debated during the 1992 presidential election year. The second section will explore how the notion of a Clinton doctrine was discursively expressed and politicized, by various actors within the discourse, to facilitate and/or undermine Clinton's foreign policy choices during the first term. Thirdly, the next section will trace how the Clinton doctrine was rhetorically wielded and defined, within the national debate, during Clinton's second term. As Clinton entered his second term, and after a reshuffle of the national security and State Department apparatuses, Clinton sought to convey that more order, priority, and coherence were being imposed on

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to the 'Historiography of the Clinton Doctrine' subsection in the thesis' introduction for the debates regarding whether or not there existed a Clinton doctrine.

<sup>5</sup> Heiko Meiertons, *The Doctrines of U.S. Security Policy: An Evaluation under International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 178. Meiertons wrote that, 'Just as it is the case for the Bush Senior Doctrine, a labelling of such a concept by official U.S.-American sources as "doctrine" is lacking in case of the Clinton Doctrine...Hence, the labelling of single political tenets or principles for the use of force as the 'Clinton Doctrine' did not enter the language of the U.S. Government. Thus, the Clinton Doctrine, just like the Johnson, Carter, and Bush Senior doctrines, does not constitute a doctrine of U.S. security policy.'

foreign policymaking.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, during the second term the language of doctrine became more rhetorically charged, and centralized, within the wider discourse than it had during the first term; especially given the scale of the operations which Clinton authorized in his last four years as president, such as Operation Allied Force in Kosovo.

### **The 1992 Presidential Election: The Birth of the Clinton Doctrine**

Unlike Ronald Reagan, in Clinton's rise to power he was not repudiating 'a governing regime in collapse. Nor was he, like George H.W. Bush, the faithful son of an unfinished revolution. A Democrat seeking the presidency in the post-Reagan era, Clinton set out to pre-empt the Republican revolution by promising a "third way."<sup>7</sup> The success of Clintonian politics was how it was able to package the reconfiguration of Reaganism as part of a 'third way' approach.<sup>8</sup> This approach was, perhaps, best defined by its transatlantic adherents: Clinton's New Democrats and Blair's New Labour. However, it did have expressions in other European countries such as Germany and France.<sup>9</sup> The third way supposedly 'rejected the neo-liberal belief that everything can be left to the market, but also saw the traditional left-of-center faith in state intervention in the economy as outdated.'<sup>10</sup> As with Clinton's approach to communication known as triangulation, which sought to position him as being above the left

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<sup>6</sup> Ivo H. Daalder & I. M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), pp. 240-241.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Skowronek (ed), *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (London: Polity, 1998). The founder of the idea was Anthony Giddens who described as a centrist political position seeking to reconcile right and left-wing politics through advancing center-right economic policies and center-left social policies; Jack Godwin, *Clintonomics: How Bill Clinton Reengineered the Reagan Revolution* (New York: American Management Association, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> 'Memorandum of Conversation - Prime Minister Tony Blair and the British Cabinet,' May 29, 1997, *Clinton Digital Library*, p. 1. <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101496>. After Clinton told Blair, during a conversation, that he admired what Blair did for the Labour Party in having the 'freedom to capture the center and move into tomorrow,' Blair responded with: 'The truth is we took part of what we did from you; I am happy that these issues are on the agenda in the rest of Europe now.'

<sup>10</sup> Anne Mellbye, 'A Brief History of the Third Way,' *The Guardian* (February 10, 2003) - <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/feb/10/labour.uk1>

and right sides of the political spectrum, adherence to the third way was a way to legitimize decisions through rationalizing them as not being based upon rigid orthodoxies, but through protean political visions promulgated to manage public opinion.<sup>11</sup> Such an approach was a product of needing to bring the Democrats more to the center after the Reagan-Bush era; this also meant emphasizing the importance of American global leadership, military spending, and not shying away from asserting its determination to militarily intervene around the world when necessary.<sup>12</sup> In this context, from the outset in 1992 Clinton's leadership posture in foreign policy was informed by a pragmatic and adaptive approach that sought to balance domestic political concerns with American global interests; a necessary endeavour in the newly spawned post-Cold War era during which there were many disagreements about what American leadership should look like.<sup>13</sup>

In his memoir, Clinton acknowledged that many Washington observers thought that his 1992 campaign was too focused on economic issues, and foreign policy was not emphasized enough.<sup>14</sup> Clinton understood why this was the case. A famous phrase from the Clinton campaign, highlighting its heavy focus on the economy, was 'it's the economy, stupid!'<sup>15</sup> During an interview for this study, a foreign policy speechwriter for Clinton during

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<sup>11</sup> Skowronek, p. 81. Also see: Bruce F. Nesmith & Paul J. Quirk, 'Triangulation: Position and Leadership in Clinton's Domestic Policy,' in Michael Nelson et al., *42: Inside the Presidency of Bill Clinton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), pp. 46-76.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin O. Fordham, 'The Evolution of Republican and Democratic Positions on Cold War Military Spending: A Historical Puzzle,' *Social Science History* 31:4 (2007), 603-636. After the mid-1960s, the Democrats tended to oppose larger military budgets and continued to decline through the 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>13</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 'Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Samuel Berger and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott,' May 21, 1997, *Clinton White House Digital* - <https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1997/05/1997-05-21-berger-and-talbott-briefing-on-president-europe-trip.html>. The Clinton administration's evolving narrative to define America's relationship with its partners has since been understood as defining the new partnership which was structured by three narrative themes: America as world leader, reconstituting the threat environment, and promoting democracy. During a press briefing in May 1997, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger emphasised that the cooperation America had built with the European Union on political, economic, and law enforcement issues was 'an integral part of the transatlantic fabric that the President is seeking to build for the period ahead.'; for a study into what was occasionally called the 'new partnership' see: Jason A. Edwards & Joseph M. Valenzano, 'Bill Clinton's "New Partnership" Anecdote: Toward a post-Cold War Foreign Policy Rhetoric,' *Journal of Language and Politics* 6:3 (2007), pp. 303-325.

<sup>14</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 2004), p. 502.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Kelly, 'The 1992 Campaign: The Democrats - Clinton and Bush Compete to Be Champion of Change; Democrat Fights Perceptions of Bush Gain,' *The New York Times* (October 31, 1992) -

the 1992 campaign, Joshua Muravchik, told the author that Clinton was determined to focus ‘like a laser’ on the economy and was determined to have no foreign policy.<sup>16</sup> Muravchik, a neoconservative, was reported by the *New York Times* as being at odds with certain opponents in the Clinton camp of the decision to make him a candidate for Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights due to Muravchik’s supposedly overly hawkish beliefs.<sup>17</sup> Muravchik claimed to the author that no one felt the determination of the campaign to limit the attention on foreign policy more acutely than he since he was ‘the co-author of the only foreign policy speech he gave in the campaign...It was supposed to be a first of a series of foreign policy speeches he was going to make in the campaign and then they said he’s done one and that’s enough.’<sup>18</sup> Muravchik said that since he had supported Clinton, he was angry at the candidate’s neglect of foreign policy, especially since Muravchik ‘had been mostly on the Republican side.’<sup>19</sup> The disappointment of conservatives with Clinton’s foreign policy leadership was thus felt early on in his presidential career.

During Clinton’s speech at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on August 13, 1992, dedicated solely to foreign affairs, after he received the Democratic nomination, he declared that despite the Cold War being over, the ‘president must be ready to defy and defeat those who threaten us.’<sup>20</sup> ‘Too often this administration has held on to old assumptions,’ Clinton charged George H.W. Bush, ‘and old policies trying to prop up yesterday’s status quo.’<sup>21</sup> Clinton said that though he commended Bush’s leadership in stalling Iraqi aggression, he did not believe the president had the necessary vision to guide the

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<https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/31/us/1992-campaign-democrats-clinton-bush-compete-be-champion-change-democrat-fights.html>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Joshua Muravchik, February 12, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, ‘The Transition; Behind Appointments, Quiet Warring,’ *The New York Times* (December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1992) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/13/us/the-transition-behind-appointments-quiet-warring.html>

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Joshua Muravchik, February 12, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Joshua Muravchik, February 12, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Bill Clinton Campaign Speech at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, August 13, 1992, *C-Span* - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?311119-1/clinton-campaign-speech>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

U.S. in this new era.<sup>22</sup> Clinton later wrote that Bush's new world order was rife with chaos, unresolved questions, and that it was in the interests of the U.S. to ensure the peaceful transition of former communist states into stable democracies.<sup>23</sup>

Although during the 1992 campaign, Clinton did mainly focus on economic issues, Richard Clarke told the author that Clinton, whilst governor of Arkansas, began to pay serious attention to foreign affairs and international diplomacy through making foreign trips and getting to know foreign leaders.<sup>24</sup> James Cooper shows that one of those diplomatic issues about which Clinton cared deeply was Northern Ireland.<sup>25</sup> Clinton promised that, as president, 'he would dispatch a special envoy to Northern Ireland and Gerry Adams would be granted a visa to enter the U.S.'<sup>26</sup> Though Clinton was appealing to Irish-American voters, and such a promise can be seen as an example of electioneering during the primaries, the candidate had a good grasp on how to navigate the complex issues of his time. Leon Fuerth, Al Gore's national security adviser and someone who had 'full access to national security data in real time,' claimed that during campaign discussions on topical foreign policy issues Clinton 'knew a hell of a lot more about international affairs than people were giving him credit for. His questions were very good, and he listened very well.'<sup>27</sup>

While Clinton inherited and continued certain foreign policies from Bush, such as the Somalian intervention and the Balkan question, he sought to repudiate Bush's leadership in 1992 as a way to confer legitimacy upon himself. A 1992 periodical from the *Chicago Tribune* read that Bush 'finds himself at the end of his term in much the same position as Woodrow Wilson was in 1919[...] like Bush last spring, Wilson came under attack for his

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Clinton, pp. 502-504.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>25</sup> James Cooper, *The Politics of Diplomacy: U.S. Presidents and the Northern Ireland Conflict 1967-1998* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 196.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper, p. 196.

<sup>27</sup> Miller Center, University of Virginia, William J. Clinton Presidential History Project: Interview 1 with Leon Fuerth, July 7, 2008, Washington D.C., with Michael Nelson, p. 9. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/leon-fuerth-oral-history>

obsession with foreign crisis.’<sup>28</sup> Acknowledging Clinton’s repudiatory stance vis a vis Bush’s overemphasis on foreign policy and his neglect of fledgling democracies in the process, a 1992 *New York Times* article by A.M. Rosenthal, titled ‘The Clinton Doctrine,’ observed that Clinton had delivered one of his longest speeches – in Milwaukee – on foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> Berger later alluded to the Milwaukee speech as a forerunner of NATO ‘enlargement.’<sup>30</sup>

In that speech, Clinton gave hints that his foreign policy would be much more idealistic and Wilsonian in nature than was Bush’s. Clinton charged Bush with showing indifference to aiding the growth of democracy, such as in China, and ‘in a world where freedom, not tyranny, is on the march, the central calculus of pure power politics simply does not compute.’<sup>31</sup> In Milwaukee, Clinton argued that democracies do not go to war with one another and they ‘do not sponsor international terrorism....Democracy abroad helps protect economic and security interests at home.’<sup>32</sup> Rosenthal wrote that, ‘The campaign of 1992, so long a desert of tedium and cynicism, has finally produced what the country has needed for too many dry years – a lucid, warm adult statement of principle about what the United States can give to the world, and gain from it.’<sup>33</sup> However, although those sympathetic to Clinton were claiming he had produced a clear statement of principle about America’s role in the world, other commentators were dubious.

After Clinton won the 1992 election, *The Atlanta Constitution* declared that new strategic planning for the post-Cold War era was necessary and a major ‘Clinton doctrine needed’ and that it ‘must be devised’ to outline the role of the United States in external

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<sup>28</sup> Nicholas M. Horrock, ‘Pax Americana,’ *Chicago Tribune* (December 20, 1992), p. 69. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/389796972/?terms=Horrock&match=1>

<sup>29</sup> A. M. Rosenthal, ‘On My Mind; The Clinton Doctrine,’ *The New York Times* (October 6, 1992) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/06/opinion/on-my-mind-the-clinton-doctrine.html>

<sup>30</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, William J. Clinton Presidential History Project: Interview with Samuel R. Berger, March 24-25, 2005, Charlottesville, Virginia., with Russell L. Riley, Timothy Naftali, & Robert Strong, p. 22. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/samuel-r-berger-oral-history>.

<sup>31</sup> Rosenthal.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

conflicts.<sup>34</sup> This demand for a Clinton doctrine foreshadowed how the political and editorial commentary throughout the 1990s would scrutinize Clinton's foreign policy leadership. No speech would satisfy his critics. During an interview for this study, Richard Clarke, a member of Clinton's National Security Council, told the author that, 'Clinton gets a reputation from historians for being domestically focused and having had no foreign policy experience. I think that's quite wrong.'<sup>35</sup> Thus, Clinton did not ignore foreign policy. Rather, the perceived lack of vision and doctrine in his foreign policy leadership was a product of his triangulation approach to politics and the times during which he found himself. The Cold War was over. Liberal hegemony in the unipolar world necessitated a flexible American leadership – or at least one that presented itself as such.

### **The Clinton Doctrine and Establishing Leadership Legitimacy: 1993-1997**

Not long after Clinton assumed office, on January 22, 1993 liberal intellectual Anthony Lewis advocated that Clinton intervene in Bosnia to halt Serbian aggression.<sup>36</sup> Lewis argued that if Clinton's statements about centralizing democratic enlargement and the importance of human rights in foreign policy 'is to have any meaning – if it is to be respected as the Clinton Doctrine – the place to apply it is at hand in Bosnia.'<sup>37</sup> 'The stakes are high,' wrote Lewis, 'for Bill Clinton's credibility abroad as a decisive President.'<sup>38</sup> Those sympathetic with the president's foreign policy goals were keen – early on – to lionize Clinton's statements into a doctrine to give his foreign policy some definition.

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<sup>34</sup> John Hall, 'Pentagon, Take Note: Image Is Everything,' *The Atlanta Constitution* (December 13, 1992), p. 70. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/402821630/?terms=Clinton%20doctrine>

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Lewis, 'Abroad at Home; The Clinton Doctrine?' *The New York Times* (January 22, 1993) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/22/opinion/abroad-at-home-the-clinton-doctrine.html>

<sup>37</sup> Lewis.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

On June 18, 1993, one Professor Heinz Kern wrote a column titled ‘The Clinton Doctrine: A New Foreign Policy,’ within which he argued that the administration’s decision to not intervene in Bosnia reflected the emergence of a ‘new foreign policy strategy of limited engagement...the “Clinton Doctrine.”’<sup>39</sup> Kern claimed that by acknowledging the emergence of a multipolar world, the Clinton doctrine concedes that America ‘has lost superpower status.’ In this vein, international stability can only be maintained through cooperation and the ‘Clinton Doctrine is a bold and needed attempt to face America’s diminished role in a world with many challenges’ and should be seen as protecting America from over-commitment.<sup>40</sup> The discourse of engagement was slowly forming into one of the foundational conceptual blocks of how people conceptualized the Clinton doctrine during the Clinton presidency; that being measuring the Wilsonian thrust of the administration’s foreign policy against what could be practically done given the available resources and strategic contingencies to be considered in the post-Cold War world.<sup>41</sup> One important remark to flesh out in Kern’s periodical, however, is how the post-Cold War era was seen by some as multipolar and its implication for the debates over a Clinton doctrine throughout the 1990s.

The previous chapter noted how the conservative writer Charles Krauthammer popularized the notion of the unipolar moment which implied that America had a free hand to do as it wished since it was the sole superpower; the main pole of power in the international system. As Krauthammer wrote, with the passing of the Soviet Union, ‘America enjoys a

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<sup>39</sup> Heinz A. J. Kern, ‘The Clinton Doctrine: A New Foreign Policy,’ *The Christian Science Monitor* (June 18, 1993) - <https://www.csmonitor.com/1993/0618/18191.html>

<sup>40</sup> Kern.

<sup>41</sup> ‘The 1993 State of the Union (Address to a Joint Session of the Congress,’ *The Clinton Library* (February 17, 1993) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=840MahAgJh0>, 50:04. Clinton, during his first State of the Union address, declared that, ‘As we restructure our military forces to meet the new threats of the post-Cold War world, it is true that we can responsibly reduce our defense budget. And we may all doubt what that range of reductions is. But, let me say that as long as I am president, I will do everything I can to make sure that the men and women who serve under the American flag will remain the best trained, the best prepared, the best equipped fighting force in the world...We still have responsibilities around the world. We are the world’s only superpower. This is still a dangerous and uncertain time, and we owe it to the people in uniform that we adequately provide for the national defense.’

predominance of power greater than any that has existed in the half-millennium of the modern state system.’<sup>42</sup> Multipolarity, on the other hand, implies something different for the exertion of American global power. In structural realist parlance, bipolarity defines an international system with two great powers, as was the case during the Cold War, and a multipolar system consists of three or more great powers which was the norm from 1648 to 1945.<sup>43</sup> Kern’s argument that the Clinton doctrine acknowledged the emergence of a multipolar world, and conceded that America ‘lost superpower status,’ underscored the administration’s recognition of new global dynamics requiring prudence.

For the administration, this meant recognizing that America’s uniquely powerful position needed to be consolidated through multilateralism when it could do so, and unilateralism when it needed to do so.<sup>44</sup> Or, as Clinton’s ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright in 1993 referred to it: ‘aggressive multilateralism.’<sup>45</sup> The 1990s was, nonetheless, unipolar since no power – neither Russia, China, nor Japan – came close to possessing America’s ability to project itself militarily in any corner of the globe. As Lawrence Kaplan argued, in the 1990s as the Clinton administration enlarged the scope of NATO, it needed the United Nations to ‘give legitimacy to its activities as it chafed against the claims of the world organization. Internal frictions within NATO frequently inhibited its efforts to function independently of the United Nations, as in the Balkans Wars of that decade.’<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘In Defense of Democratic Realism,’ *The National Interest* 77 (2004), p. 15 - [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42895687.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3A8bbb1c38eaa0346526445003378c6e4&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42895687.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3A8bbb1c38eaa0346526445003378c6e4&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1)

<sup>43</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Chapter 3: Structural Realism,’ in Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theory: Discipline and Diversity*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> The White House, *Presidential Decision Directive-25* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 1-2. Clinton elaborated on this in his *Presidential Decision Directive-25* within which he wrote that America was entitled to employ the ‘unilateral use of military power’ to safeguard ‘uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources.

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Crossette, ‘Madeleine Korbel Albright: A Political Diplomat,’ *The New York Times* (December 6, 1996) - <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/politics/cabinet-albright.html>

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO and the U.N.: A Peculiar Relationship* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2010), p. 1.

### Searching for Purpose in the Post-Cold War Era: The Semantics of the Clinton Doctrine

Kathryn Olson argued that ‘democratic enlargement emerged as the first fully formed post-Cold War interpretative frame for foreign policy rhetoric.’<sup>47</sup> The end of the Cold War had produced unresolved strategic and rhetorical problems since America’s ‘commanding ideas’ of that era such as national security and Communist containment rationalized courses of action and, in the latter case, ‘influenced Americans’ understandings of themselves in virtually every realm, from popular culture to economics.’<sup>48</sup> Engaging strategically important countries in the post-Cold War world, such as those previously under the former Soviet bloc, through advancing democratic and market reforms was a cornerstone of Clinton’s overarching foreign policy. This was reflected in a phone call between Clinton and the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, on January 23, 1993, three days after Clinton assumed office, during which the latter said: ‘I want to reemphasize with you my commitment that Russia be a top priority for U.S. foreign policy during my Administration.’<sup>49</sup> ‘I want you to know,’ Clinton stated, ‘that we are determined to do whatever we can to help Russia’s democratic reforms to succeed. We will try to make our economic aid as beneficial as possible.’<sup>50</sup> Three days later, during Clinton’s first telephone call with Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk, the former praised the latter for economic reforms that had been launched as a ‘major step forward...The more you coordinate these reforms with the I.M.F.

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<sup>47</sup> Kathryn M. Olson, ‘Democratic Enlargement’s Value Hierarchy and Rhetorical Forms: An Analysis of Clinton’s Use of a Post-Cold War Symbolic Frame to Justify Military Interventions,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34:2 (2004), 307-340 (p. 307).

<sup>48</sup> Olson, ‘Democratic Enlargement’s Value Hierarchy and Rhetorical Forms,’ p. 308.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Memorandum of Telephone Conversation - President Boris Yeltsin of Russia,’ January 23, 1993, *Clinton Digital Library* - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101311>, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

[International Monetary Fund], the more supportive we can be and the more international economic assistance you can get.’<sup>51</sup>

James Boys posited that Clinton’s grand strategy was a break from the past ‘for it recognized the limits of American power, but sought to overcome them by adopting a multilateral approach to foreign policy. This belief resulted in the early embrace of the United Nations as the organization of choice to execute U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s.’<sup>52</sup> This was informed by the fact that America did not have one single enemy around which to rally a national consensus, as it had during the Cold War, and multilateralism was a way to rally an international consensus to control more diverse threats and regional instabilities.<sup>53</sup> Clarke told the author that Clinton ‘spent a lot of time on the United Nations. So, no. I never thought that we had trouble getting him away from domestic issues. In fact, I do remember a lot of people working on domestic issues complaining that we had too much of his time.’<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, an early British assessment of its bilateral relations with America indicated that such a reassessment was timely because ‘President Clinton’s views on foreign policy are largely unformed,’ as a confidential document written by the Foreign Secretary to the Prime Minister from January 1993 read.<sup>55</sup> As the new administration settled in, it attempted to give a form to its foreign policy ideas.

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<sup>51</sup> ‘Memorandum of Telephone Conversation - President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine,’ January 26, 1993, *Clinton Digital Library* - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101310>., p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Boys, p. 266.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Bill Clinton Record,’ in U.S. Congressional Record Volume 141, Number 88 (Thursday, May 25, 1995), pp. E1127-E1129. - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-1995-05-25/html/CREC-1995-05-25-pt1-PgH5593-3.htm>. One Congressman, in support of Clinton’s record, referenced a 1995 periodical in the *Washington Monthly*, by Daniel Franklin, which read that, ‘True, there is no “Clinton Doctrine” by which to measure every foreign policy question that comes down the pike. It would no doubt make things easier if there were. But simple doctrines work in simple worlds. President from Truman to Regan could vow to fight communism wherever it reared its head... Clinton, then, is being penalized because there is no mortal threat to the country.’; John Lewis Gaddis, ‘Foreign Policy by Autopilot,’ *Hoover Institution* (July 30, 2000) - <https://www.hoover.org/research/foreign-policy-autopilot>. Gaddis compared the first decade of the post-Cold War world with the first decade after the Second World War and regretted that ‘nothing we have done since the Cold War ended comes close to approximating even one of those achievements. Perhaps the absence of an enemy has had something to do with this.’

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> PREM 19/4499. Confidential: Bilateral Relations With The United States. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, January 25, 1993. Records of the Prime Minister’s Office, The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive

Internal discussions within Bill Clinton's National Security Council took on an editorial bent as it tried to forge a label to codify the administration's project. George Kennan, the intellectual architect of containment, told Clinton's advisers 'Don't even try!' after Clinton had pressed his staff 'to come up with a compelling word or phrase that would convey the thrust of the administration's post-Cold War foreign policy.'<sup>56</sup> However, they did try. Tony Lake, Clinton's first national security adviser, and his desk officers swapped stories about how Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney had pushed the phrase "'World Dominance'" and how Bush eventually went with "new world order" only to see both phrases written off as rhetorical gimmicks.<sup>57</sup> Clarke recalled that,

I think presidential administrations frequently look for changes in emphasis or changes in direction in national security strategy. I think when the Clinton administration came into office, they had an open discussion in the administration about 'what are we going to call the post-Cold War world?' And 'what are we going to call our post-Cold War strategy?' Because the Cold War was over, they nonetheless thought we should keep NATO, keep a strong defense budget, and needed a strategy to justify that [...] I remember in the White House we had a set of open contests to come up with a name for such a strategy.<sup>58</sup>

These discussions about how the administration was going to define the post-Cold War world, their approach to it, and the criteria for the use of force never took the form of a doctrine.

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Website. We need to bear in mind 'that the United States is likely to become more different, more distant and more foreign in the next decade.' -

[https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?\\_q=Tony+blair&\\_sd=1992&\\_ed=2004&\\_hb=tna](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Tony+blair&_sd=1992&_ed=2004&_hb=tna)

<sup>56</sup> Maney, *Bill Clinton: New Gilded Age President*, p. 116.

<sup>57</sup> Douglas Brinkley, 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine,' *Foreign Policy* 106:1 (1997), p. 114.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

William Antholis, a member of Clinton's National Security Council from 1995 to 1999, recalled in an interview for this study that, 'I was never aware, nor was I ever told that there was a "Clinton Doctrine."'”<sup>59</sup> Corresponding to the author, Peter Feaver, who served as Clinton's Director of Defense Policy and Arms Control from 1993 to 1994, elaborated upon this when wrote that,

I do not recall much discussion of a "Clinton Doctrine." We absolutely spent a great deal of time debating "criteria for the use of force," reacting to the strait-jacket constraints of the so-called Powell (or Weinberger) Doctrine. The early drafts of the *National Security Strategy* were more forward-leaning in terms of when and how force might be used as a push-back against the Powell doctrine – and then after the Mogadishu raid, those criteria were hotly debated again within the interagency and the end result was something of a retreat away from more permissive conditions. But I do not recall this taking the form of a debate over a "doctrine.””<sup>60</sup>

Antholis' and Feaver's response illuminates upon two critical issues which concern how the Clinton administration thought about doctrines.

Firstly, the notion of a Clinton doctrine, and doctrine more broadly, were terms the administration did not use to codify their own strategic agendas and lines of action. In this light, Boys argued that there was 'tension within the administration over the need for a Clinton Doctrine or even the existence of a grand strategy.’<sup>61</sup> Responding to a question asking why Clinton resisted doctrine, Mark Gearan, Clinton's communications director from 1993 to 1995, told the author that Clinton wisely did so since the world was changing after

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with William Antholis, March 7, 2023.

<sup>60</sup> Written response from Peter Feaver, February 8, 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 268

the collapse of the Soviet Union which necessitated flexibility of action.<sup>62</sup> In this light, George Kennan had earlier warned the Clinton administration against the endorsement of doctrines to not over-simplify their foreign policy.<sup>63</sup> Fuerth has since remarked that the Clinton administration did not seek to associate with some ‘doctrine on the use of force that would have bound us to implement it everywhere.’<sup>64</sup> Fuerth suggested that there ‘is always a gap between philosophy and events. You need to judge an administration on its actions, not its doctrines.’<sup>65</sup> Can a presidential statement, Fuerth asked, ‘explain what we should do or whom we should support in all circumstances? Should we always adhere to a doctrine?’<sup>66</sup> Further, Gearan stated to the author that rhetorically resisting doctrine did not mean that Clinton was resistant to assert his views about America’s global responsibilities since Clinton was expansive in his thoughts and reflected a lot about America’s role in the world.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Kori Schake, a member of the Secretary of Defense’s office from 1994 to 1996, corresponded to the author that Clinton’s policies ‘were marginally more interventionist than some other post-war presidents.’<sup>68</sup>

Secondly, Feaver’s response reflects the push and pull between more permissive uses of force and the influence of constraints, such as the debates about the so-called Powell doctrine. This codified six conditions that must be met in America’s use of force, including: the engagement must be deemed vital to America’s interest or that of its allies; that U.S. forces should only be sent with the clear intention of winning; third, that the U.S. should have clearly defined political and military obligations; the size and purpose of the force sent out to fight should be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary; troops should be assured that

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Mark Gearan, August 17, 2023.

<sup>63</sup> H. W. Brands, ‘Presidential Doctrines: An Introduction,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (2006), 1-4 (p. 4).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Mark Gearan, August 17, 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Written response from Kori Schake, July 9, 2024.

they have the support of the American people and Congress; and, finally, that the commitment of American forces to combat should be a last resort.<sup>69</sup> These were developed by Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, who promoted these conditions as part of a worldview ‘shaped in the jungles of Vietnam and the corridors of Washington.’<sup>70</sup> With the administration viewing such conditions as a ‘straitjacket,’ as Feaver wrote, that indicated its aversion to being dogmatic not only in rhetoric, but in strategically applying military force. Recalling the first chapter’s exploration into how policymakers conceptualize the role of doctrines in the decision-making process, in that context Feaver’s recollection underscores the differing interpretations of how doctrines are applied in rationalizing choices, and when administrations view them as necessary to endorse or dismiss.

For example, in mid-December 1992, the journalist John Omicinski of Ohio’s *News-Messenger* reported on Vice President-elect Al Gore being asked whether the inherited policy of intervention in Somalia required a ‘doctrine-like statement.’<sup>71</sup> To this question, Gore responded saying that, ‘There’s always a tendency...to take a specific set of circumstances and try to lock it into some grandiose doctrine that then creates pressure to use similar force in all kinds of other situations. And that need not be done in this case.’<sup>72</sup> Somalia, according to Clinton adviser Sidney Blumenthal, signified the administration’s first true foreign policy challenge.<sup>73</sup> Clinton never justified American intervention in Somalia in doctrinal terms, but as a humanitarian mission to prevent the famine spreading and reduce the escalation of a civil

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<sup>69</sup> Walter LaFeber, ‘The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine,’ *Political Science Quarterly* 124:1 (2009), 71-93 (p. 73).

<sup>70</sup> Matthew Moten, *Presidents and Their Generals* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 313.

<sup>71</sup> John Omicinski, ‘Clinton Doctrine: One Size Fits All,’ *The News-Messenger* (December 14, 1992), p. 4. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/304464613/?terms=Clinton%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>72</sup> Omicinski, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Sidney Blumenthal, *The Clinton Wars* (New York: Blume, 2004), p. 60.

war.<sup>74</sup> According to Clarke, this led to ‘mission-creep’ due to a gradual expansion of the intervention’s mission into a nation-building one.<sup>75</sup>

This went beyond its original scope to intervene in a famine and civil war because when the Clinton administration came into office, they did not realize the scale of the crisis.<sup>76</sup> In this way, the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd reported to the Prime Minister in February 1993 that the American Secretary of Defense Les Aspin did not see the Clinton administration altering the policies of their predecessor in Somalia, ‘except at the margins.’<sup>77</sup> According to Gallup polling, the low-point for Clinton’s job approval rating was in mid-1993 when it plummeted to just 37%.<sup>78</sup> No perceivable clear rationalization of the Somali mission, and an inability to take control of the situation now causing losses in American lives, led to charged criticism from Clinton’s Republican opponents.

During a debate in Congress on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1993, Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona) dismayed at Clinton’s lack of clarity in explaining to Congress what purpose American forces had in Somalia.<sup>79</sup> McCain criticized the administration’s rhetoric regarding humanitarian causes, cooperative security, and engagement by suggesting such rhetoric could not substitute for a clear strategy.<sup>80</sup> McCain demanded that, ‘We need a Clinton Doctrine. We need one we can debate and use to shape a national and international consensus[...]the President needs to clearly define his conditions for using military force, and how he intends to consult the

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<sup>74</sup> ‘President Clinton’s Address to the Nation on Somalia,’ *The Clinton Library* (October 7, 1993) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYTq8MOIJvo&t=306s>.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>77</sup> PREM 19/4499. Foreign Secretary’s Talks with U.S. Defense Secretary, Munich, 6 February 1993, p. 2. Records of the Prime Minister’s Office, The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive Website. - <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?q=Tony+blair&sd=1992&ed=2004&hb=tna>

<sup>78</sup> Gallup, Presidential Approval Ratings – Bill Clinton - <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116584/presidential-approval-ratings-bill-clinton.aspx>

<sup>79</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, ‘Beyond Good Intentions: Using Force in Bosnia and Somalia,’ *Proceedings and Debates of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress First Session. Volume 139-Part 13*. (Washington D.C., August 2, 1993), p. 18143. - <https://www.congress.gov/103/crecb/1993/08/02/GPO-CRECB-1993-pt13-1-1.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> ‘Beyond Good Intentions: Using Force in Bosnia and Somalia’ p. 18144.

Congress.<sup>81</sup> McCain's remarks convey how the broader perceptions about the lack of a Clinton doctrine were contributing to the development of a consensus, early on in the presidency, that Clinton was adrift on foreign policy. In turn, the Clinton doctrine was being solely defined and invoked by those on the outside of the administration. Although the Clinton administration always remained cautious about associating with stances that could be construed as dogmatic, soon after McCain's remarks the administration began to produce loftier statements regarding its global outlook and plans.

Nine months into its term, Charles Maynes in *Foreign Policy* wrote, 'the Clinton administration finally presented its new approach with four speeches:' the secretary of state's address at Columbia University; the national security adviser's speech at John Hopkins University; Albright's speech at the National Defense University; and President Clinton's address to the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>82</sup> These speeches were made within a week of each other and must, in that context, be seen as a coordinated attempt to communicate the administration's foreign policy. On September 20, Secretary of State Christopher spoke about the necessity to advance the peace process between Israelis and its Arab neighbours, but also about rejecting isolationism as a 'dangerous argument' as America must be ready to be actively engaged and committed to internationalism.<sup>83</sup> Lake gave his speech on September 21, 1993, titled 'From Containment to Enlargement,' in which he proclaimed that, 'The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 18144.

<sup>82</sup> Charles W. Maynes, 'A Workable Clinton Doctrine,' *Foreign Policy* 93:1 (1993/1994), p. 3. - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1149017>

<sup>83</sup> Warren Christopher Speech on U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, September 20, 1993, *C-Span* - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?50567-1/us-foreign-policy>

<sup>84</sup> Anthony Lake, 'From Containment to Enlargement Speech to the John Hopkins University,' (September 21, 1993, Washington D.C.) *Clinton Digital Library* - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/9013>

On September 23, Albright rearticulated these themes in a context which warned against not only isolationism, but complacency by people confused about the new era as some could ‘conceive of no threats to America that are not Cold War threats. They look at that empty chair on the other side of the chess table and counsel us to sit back, put up our feet, and lose interest in the outside world.’<sup>85</sup> In that light, Clinton, on September 27, proclaimed that, ‘The United States intends to remain engaged and to lead.’ Though Clinton suggested America could not solve every problem, it will serve as a fulcrum for change and a pivot point for peace.’<sup>86</sup> America’s overriding purpose, Clinton continued, was ‘to expand and strengthen the world’s community of market-based democracies. During the Cold War we sought to contain a threat to the survival of free institutions. Now we seek to enlarge the circle of nations that live under those free institutions.’<sup>87</sup> What all these speeches foreshadowed were the dual strategies of enlargement and engagement which would become officially codified in the upcoming review and strategy documents beginning to be published by the U.S. Government in late 1993. John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Clinton, wrote in the Department of Defense’s October 1993 *Bottom-Up Review*, chaired by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, that the rise of regional powers could lead to a more dangerous world ‘hence the importance of the President’s “imperative of engagement” described herein...The military has an important role in engagement – helping to shape the international environment in appropriate ways to bring about a more peaceful and stable world.’<sup>88</sup> Aspin wrote that the conclusion of the review demonstrates to America’s allies and

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<sup>85</sup> Madeleine Albright Speech on U.S. Foreign Policy at the National War College, September 23, 1993, *C-Span* - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?50730-1/us-foreign-policy>

<sup>86</sup> ‘Remarks to the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 27, 1993, *Public Papers of the President of the United States, William J Clinton Book II*, p. 1614.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Remarks to the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,’ p. 1614.

<sup>88</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington D.C., 1993), p. 1. - <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA359953.pdf>

potential foes alike ‘that the United States will remain a world power in this new era. We are not going to withdraw from our involvement around the world.’<sup>89</sup>

Schake corresponded to the author that Clinton did not have ‘budgets and plans to effectively implement his policies.’<sup>90</sup> ‘As General Powell used to say during that time,’ Schake recollected, “‘show me your budget and I’ll tell you your strategy.” Also, the Clinton administration and the Republican Congress under Gingrich’s leadership led to lots of friction that I think the foreign policy criticism is a reflection of.’<sup>91</sup> The prospect of publicly framing the administration’s direction on issues as a doctrine, such as advancing central and eastern Europe’s transition to democracy or being committed to reducing regional instability in areas that could pose a threat to America’s strategic interests, did not compute with how the Clinton administration sought to advance and seek legitimacy for its options and choices.<sup>92</sup> The execution of the engagement strategy would become a central point of contention in 1994 when Clinton’s legitimacy waned in the face of mounting political pressure.

### Rhetorizing about the Clinton Doctrine in 1994: A Crisis of Leadership Authority

1994 was a crucial year in the history of Clinton’s presidency. The mid-term election campaign saw the Republican Party embark upon a concerted rhetorical repudiation of Clinton’s ‘New Democrat’ leadership.<sup>93</sup> The Republican Revolution saw the Republicans eventually win both houses of Congress, a net of ten governorships, and many state

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<sup>89</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, p. iii.

<sup>90</sup> Written response from Kori Schake, July 9, 2024.

<sup>91</sup> Written response from Kori Schake, July 9, 2024.

<sup>92</sup> The White House, *Presidential Review Directive/NSC-36* (July 5, 1993), pp. 2-3. - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16201>

<sup>93</sup> Katharine Q. Seelye, ‘The 1994 Campaign: The Republicans; With Fiery Words, Gingrich Builds His Kingdom,’ *The New York Times* (October 27, 1994) - <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/27/us/the-1994-campaign-the-republicans-with-fiery-words-gingrich-builds-his-kingdom.html>. ‘In the new era, Mr. Gingrich remains the partisan but gets to do the vision thing too. His goal: to reshape national policy, or, in his immodest phrases, “renew American civilization” and “redirect the fate of the human race.”’

legislatures. Throughout 1994, the G.O.P. criticized Clinton's domestic policy, such as his ban on assault weapons and allowing homosexuals to be in the military, and the administration's decision to embed American troops under the command of the United Nations.<sup>94</sup> House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia), the Contract with America's main author, criticized Clinton's multilateral foreign policy agenda after embedding American troops to a United Nations task force in the Balkans when the former stated that the 'Clinton administration allowed the United Nations to replace the United States as the leading institution in foreign policy.'<sup>95</sup> In turn, Gingrich specifically defined the Clinton doctrine as an embodiment of the president lacking the will to lead internationally.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Rep. Cass Ballenger (R-North Carolina) charged: 'Clinton simply does not care about foreign policy[...] But the Clinton Doctrine is: "If it doesn't show up on the polls, don't worry about it" ... We need a President who knows where he is going on foreign policy.'<sup>97</sup>

In May 1994, the conservative *American Enterprise Institute* held a debate between distinguished thinkers and politicians, including Richard Perle, Richard Barnet, Steven Solarz, and Ted Carpenter on the question: does Clinton have a foreign policy?<sup>98</sup> The debate began by the host, Ben Wattenberg, telling the audience that during the Cold War, American foreign policy could be labelled with one word, containment, but that under Clinton foreign policy seemed to be adrift and he asked the participants to each provide a label on Clinton's foreign policy.<sup>99</sup> Barnet labelled it as 'pragmatic globalism,' Solarz as 'enlightened

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<sup>94</sup> Jeffrey Smith & Julia Preston, 'United States Plans Wider Role in U.N. Peace Keeping,' *The Washington Post* (June 18, 1993) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/06/18/us-plans-wider-role-in-un-peace-keeping/21b71516-788b-4a86-913d-608771f674e3/>. Clinton's Presidential Review Document-13, from June 1993, initiated a review of policy regarding American participation in various activities which would include the use of military force, such as international peacekeeping missions, and which further embedded American troops under the command of the United Nations.

<sup>95</sup> U.S. Congressional Record Volume 140, Number 43. Tuesday, April 19, 1994. (Washington D.C., 1994). - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-1994-04-19/html/CREC-1994-04-19-pt1-PgH71.htm>

<sup>96</sup> U.S. Congressional Record Volume 140, Number 43.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> 'Does Clinton Have a Foreign Policy? (1994) | Think Tank,' *The American Enterprise Institute* (May 7, 1994) - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJdynTN3\\_Jo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJdynTN3_Jo). Approx. 2 minutes forty-five seconds into the video.

<sup>99</sup> Does Clinton Have a Foreign Policy? (1994) | Think Tank.'

internationalism,' Carpenter as 'strategic independence,' and Perle as: 'if there is only one superpower, let it be us!'<sup>100</sup> Perle, a neoconservative then dedicated to spearheading American global leadership in a more hawkish and unilateral way, charged that

In addition to the inconstancy of the president, you have a secretary of state who believes that foreign policy should be conducted on a case-by-case basis which gives no indication to the rest of the world about what we stand for. Yet, prevents enemies from knowing where lines are drawn, and it denies friends the confidence of knowing that we are with them in situations they face.<sup>101</sup>

To this argument, Solarz, the former chairman of the House Committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, said that when it comes to foreign policy 'foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds' and that he did not think it was possible in foreign policy to be absolutely consistent in the application of policy everywhere in the world.<sup>102</sup>

This debate reflects how the labels used by those on the outside of the administration to conceptually define Clinton's foreign policy leadership were diverse and often contradictory, highlighting the perceived lack of a cohesive vision from the administration that could rally both domestic and international support. Those sympathetic to Clinton did not necessarily view his decision-making as inconsistent, such as vacillating on whether or not to use force in the Balkans, but as pragmatic, enlightened, and strategically motivated. Conversely, those on the American right, such as Perle, saw Clinton's leadership in terms of lacking a forceful message that defined America's purpose in the post-Cold War world. Secondly, and in this light, Perle's critique underscores a critical issue: charges of

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Approx. twenty-three minutes.

inconsistency can undermine the legitimization of policy choices by portraying the administration as indecisive and unreliable. This perception can weaken the administration's ability to build and sustain alliances, as well as deter adversaries which is why some administrations, such as Richard Nixon's, seek to explicitly endorse a doctrine.

Not long after this debate, perhaps in response to such criticisms, Clinton published his administration's first *National Security Strategy* document, providing a more definitive clarification as to what was guiding U.S. actions on the global stage. Clinton's first *National Security Strategy*, published in July 1994, read that American national security strategy 'is based on enlarging the community of market democracies while deterring and containing a range of threats to our nation, our allies and our interests.'<sup>103</sup> This is because, the line of reasoning went, the more that 'democracy and political and economic liberalization take hold in the world, particularly countries of geostrategic importance to us, the safer our nation is likely to be and the more our people are likely to prosper.'<sup>104</sup> Rasmus Sondergaard posed that faced with creating a grand strategy in the post-Cold War era, the democratic enlargement strategy was imbued with the discourse of Wilsonianism and the democratic peace theory.<sup>105</sup> By addressing enlargement in security terms, the administration 'securitized democracy promotion and, thereby, created a discourse that helped legitimize a gradual move towards a more militaristic foreign policy.'<sup>106</sup> Ten years prior in 1984, I.M Destler, Leslie Gelb (former President of the Council on Foreign Relations), and Clinton's National Security Adviser Tony Lake wrote a book named *Our Own Worst Enemy*.<sup>107</sup> Here, the authors drew upon their work experience and argued that ideological fragmentation was pervasive within the

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<sup>103</sup> The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington D.C., 1994), p. 2. - <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA533544.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> The White House, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Rasmus Sinding Sondergaard, 'Bill Clinton's "Democratic Enlargement" and the Securitisation of Democracy Promotion,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 26:1 (2015), 534-551.

<sup>106</sup> Sondergaard, p. 534.

<sup>107</sup> I. M. Destler & Leslie H. Gelb & Anthony Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy: The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

American foreign policy establishment and they, therefore, urged more pragmatism rather than ideology. Lake would later refer to Clinton's dedication to liberal internationalist principles, such as democracy promotion and economic integration, as a 'pragmatic neo-Wilsonian vision.'<sup>108</sup>

Clinton's administration was part of a generation that followed in the Wilsonian tradition of American foreign policy, but with a pragmatic thrust to weigh decisions based upon the contingencies, such as available resources and considerations of alliances. In this light, certain contemporaries were critical of democratic enlargement. Richard Clarke recalled to the author that 'what they hit on was such a terrible "doctrine" phrase that no one ever used it.'<sup>109</sup> 'At the time I joked with all of them,' Clarke said, 'that enlargement sounded like you know enlargement is something that male organs do... Those phrases were just awful. They really didn't catch on.'<sup>110</sup> Notwithstanding the unfortunate associations with democratic enlargement which some were making, after the publication defining this concept *The Los Angeles Times*, in August 1994, declared that the world should not be Americanized.<sup>111</sup> The piece read that, 'The Clinton doctrine of exporting our values is the wrong use of foreign policy.'<sup>112</sup> Another prong of the forward-facing national security

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<sup>108</sup> Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn & Naná de Graaff, *American Grand Strategy and Corporate Elite Networks: The Open Door since the End of the Cold War* (Amsterdam: Taylor Francis, 2016), p. 116.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023; Miller Center: University of Virginia, William J. Clinton Presidential History Project, Interview with Madeleine K. Albright, August 30, 2006. Charlottesville, Virginia., with Russell Riley, Stephen F. Knott, & Robert Strong., p. 32. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/madeleine-k-albright-oral-history>. Similarly, Madeleine Albright (Clinton's ambassador to the United Nations and later Secretary of State) recalled that discussions were held about how to encapsulate that vision definitionally and 'we did a lot of kidding about "enlargement" not being a great word.'

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023; Miller Center: University of Virginia, William J. Clinton Presidential History Project, Interview with Madeleine K. Albright, August 30, 2006. Charlottesville, Virginia., with Russell Riley, Stephen F. Knott, & Robert Strong., p. 32. - <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/madeleine-k-albright-oral-history>. Similarly, Madeleine Albright recalled that America's first post-Cold War president did have a vision, that discussions were held about how to encapsulate that vision definitionally, and that, 'We did a lot of kidding about "enlargement" not being a great word. So, integration, globalization.'

<sup>111</sup> Benjamin Schwarz, 'The World Isn't Ours to Americanize: The Clinton Doctrine of Exporting Our Values is the Wrong Use of Foreign Policy,' *The Los Angeles Times* (August 28, 1994), p. 291. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/159150612/?terms=Schwarz%20Clinton%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>112</sup> Schwarz, p. 291.

strategies was the concept of engagement. Engagement sometimes meant selective and sometimes global. Regional instability and civil wars in strategically important areas, such as the Balkans, ‘indicated that the new post-Cold War world order was not necessarily a more stable one, but on the contrary saw the rise of new conflicts. In other words, new threats were perceived that could equally legitimate America’s continuing global “engagement.”’<sup>113</sup>

Engagement, broadly defined by the July 1994 *National Security Strategy*, recognized that strong American leadership was more crucial than ever. It argued that by taking an active role internationally, the United States could enhance its own security and prosperity by discouraging aggression, promoting peaceful conflict resolution, expanding access to foreign markets, supporting democratic governments, and addressing global challenges.<sup>114</sup> However, it also stressed that active engagement would only be possible if both the American public and Congress were willing to support and fund these efforts.

Engagement thus referred to an American commitment to the continued expansion of democracies and free markets in the post-Cold War era, and selectively choosing arenas to engage militarily to resolve potentially dangerous conflicts which could threaten American global leadership in this new global paradigm. The nature and timing of the document’s publication has been viewed cynically by certain actors. On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1994, *The Los Angeles Times* reported how the administration’s *National Security Strategy* contained ‘watered down versions of earlier White House pronouncements on issues such as the use of military force, global peacekeeping and expansion of democracy around the world.’<sup>116</sup> ‘To rebut the growing criticism of the Administration’s foreign policy,’ the periodical read, ‘the report also put forward a three-page list of Clinton accomplishments, including American support for

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<sup>113</sup> Apeldoorn, p. 113.

<sup>114</sup> The White House, pp. 1-2.

<sup>116</sup> Art Pine, ‘Clinton Issues Muted National Security Report,’ *The Los Angeles Times* (July 22, 1994), p. 294. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/160245072/?terms=National%20Security%20Strategy&match=1>

economic reform in Russia, aid to Eastern Europe, and completion of two free-trade agreements.<sup>117</sup>

The influence of such documents in guiding policy, on the other hand, is disagreed upon. William Antholis, who served the Clinton White House as a Director of International Economic Affairs and a senior adviser to the National Security Adviser, told the author in an interview for this study that the national security strategies were taken seriously as a guideline.<sup>118</sup> However, Richard Clarke told the author that, ‘I remember there was a navy captain in the Clinton White House whose job it was to write the *National Security Strategy* and everyone thought that was an important thing except him.’<sup>119</sup> In this way, Feurth insisted that events were more influential than documents in shaping Clinton’s foreign policy and that the documents produced did not serve as a guide to action.<sup>120</sup> Such events spawned out of regional instability and escalating civil wars which included ethnic cleansing, and even genocide; as in Rwanda between April and July 1994.<sup>121</sup> Clinton’s decision to not intervene in Rwanda, when the evidence shows he knew of the extent of the killing from very early on, and the fact that America had the ability to deploy an intervention force to stop the genocide, was argued by one scholar as being due to three main reasons.<sup>122</sup>

First, there was unsubstantial domestic support for intervention; second, though America was capable to stop the genocide, Clinton began withdrawing from international obligations after the Black Hawk (Mogadishu raid) incident in Somalia which occurred six months before the Rwandan genocide; third, ‘the most reasonable explanation as to why he did not provide leadership to change those domestic sentiments were his priorities of budget

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<sup>117</sup> Pine, p. 294.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with William Antholis, March 7, 2023.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>120</sup> Boys, p. 272.

<sup>121</sup> Eric James Szandzik, ‘President Clinton’s Non-intervention in the Rwanda Genocide: An Analysis of U.S. Presidential Foreign Policy Decisions,’ *World Affairs* 185:1 (2022), 176-206 (p. 177). Clinton said that the failure to try to stop the Rwanda tragedies became one of the greatest regrets of his presidency.

<sup>122</sup> Szandzik, p. 178.

cuts, reduced funding for foreign operations, and the avoidance of any operation that could “mission creep.”<sup>123</sup> What this reflects is that the aforementioned criticisms being charged at Clinton, by his Republican opponents in Congress, made Clinton – at times – beholden to their ideas of what was and was not in America’s interests abroad. In 1994, therefore, politics as usual had genocidal consequences of which the debates over the Clinton doctrine played a small role in abetting as Clinton did not want to be criticized as he was regarding Somalia. In turn, during an important mid-term election year, undermining the ability of Clinton’s opponents to politically define his foreign policy leadership in their own terms led, in hindsight, to morally problematic decisions to avoid such criticisms where possible.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, criticisms did not cease.

Gearan told the author in an interview for this study that the Democrats lost the November 1994 mid-term elections because Clinton had ‘lost control of the narrative’ and people were able to define Clinton in certain ways which undermined his ability to lead effectively.<sup>125</sup> In October 1994, after the intervention in Haiti, Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-New York) declared that, ‘The new Clinton Doctrine of geographical propinquity in substance has committed the United States to again exercise an international police power in the Caribbean.’<sup>126</sup> The rhetorical weaponization of the Clinton doctrine must be seen as playing a partial role in the success of Clinton’s opponents to definitionally undermine his leadership which contributed to the ‘Republican Revolution’ of 1994. A revolution which promised to make American foreign policy serve the nation’s sole interest and wean it away from the United Nations’ peacekeeping missions.

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<sup>123</sup> Szandzik, pp. 178-179.

<sup>124</sup> Blumenthal, p. 632. The massacre in Rwanda occurred ‘right after the Somalia fiasco, and intervention was not considered by any Western power, nor was there domestic pressure to intervene – not from editorial writers of major newspapers, not from groups like Trans-Africa, not from Capitol Hill.’

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Mark Gearan, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

<sup>126</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, ‘Limited Authorization for the United States-Led Force in Haiti,’ Volume 140, Number 144 (Thursday, October 6, 1994) - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-1994-10-06/html/CREC-1994-10-06-pt2-PgH24.htm>

After winning the mid-term election, Republican legislators of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress passed the 1995 National Security Revitalization Act which sought to prevent American troops serving under the command of the United Nations unless the president determined it was necessary for national security.<sup>127</sup> In turn, Clinton began to more forcefully stress the necessity, of Americans, to bear more responsibility as part of America's duty as the world's leading power.<sup>128</sup> Christopher stated in 1995 that 'if we do not lead, no one else will.'<sup>129</sup> For the Clinton administration, this leadership was characterized by America leading the way in expanding institutions to defend and export democracy, such as NATO, and to redress humanitarian abuses occurring throughout the world which, despite frequent recognition and authorization by the United Nations, only American power could successfully undertake these missions.<sup>130</sup> In Clinton's November 1995 address to the nation, regarding the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, he proclaimed that, 'There are times, and places, where our leadership can mean the difference between peace and war. And where we can defend our fundamental values as a people and serve our most basic strategic interests.'<sup>131</sup> The airstrikes being conducted against Bosnian Serb forces throughout 1995 was legitimized by Clinton arguing that he 'authorized these activities in conjunction with our NATO allies to implement the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and NATO decisions' and 'pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.'<sup>132</sup> Others saw the employment of this authority differently.

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<sup>127</sup> H. R. 7 – National Security Revitalization Act. 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996). -

<https://www.congress.gov/bills/104th-congress/house-bill/7#:~:text=Prohibits%20the%20President%20from%20providing,by%20the%20Secretary%20of%20State>.

<sup>128</sup> Boys, p. 270.

<sup>129</sup> Apeldoorn, p. 114.

<sup>130</sup> The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 4-5. - <https://spp.fas.org/military/docops/national/1996stra.htm>

<sup>131</sup> AP Archive, 'USA: President Clinton US Peacekeeping Mission in Bosnia Speech,' November 28, 1995. - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4epeczMhvg>

<sup>132</sup> Bill Clinton, 'Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Aircraft to Bosnia-Herzegovina,' *Public Papers of the President* (September 1, 1995), pp. 1279-80.

## The 1996 Election

In 1996, the year of a presidential election, polling showed that most Americans continued to favour active U.S. involvement abroad, 'but fewer than one in ten name a foreign affairs issue as one of their top national concerns.'<sup>133</sup> Some polls showed that the public rated Bob Dole, the Republican presidential candidate, ahead of Clinton in maintaining U.S. military strength abroad and several 'trend measures show a small decline over the past year or two in public support for an activist U.S. world role.'<sup>134</sup> James Rubin, a senior adviser to Clinton, emphasized that it was important for members of the campaign to 'speak with the same voice' on foreign policy issues as he 'did not perceive major differences between President Clinton and Senator Dole on the key foreign policy issues that include U.S. global engagement and America's role as a world leader and sole remaining superpower.'<sup>135</sup> Therefore, the differences between the two lay in their overall approach to solving the threats of the world, and how their approaches were communicated. David Winston of the conservative Heritage Foundation suggested that for 'Bill Clinton, unlike his recent predecessors, foreign policy is less a matter of substance than style.'<sup>136</sup>

In this light, Dole gave a speech in June 1996 criticizing Clinton's leadership as being indecisive, vacillatory, and weak.<sup>137</sup> Dole asserted that the doctrines of previous presidents,

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<sup>133</sup> Alvin Richman, 'What the Polls Say: Issues of Concern to American Voters,' in *The Electronic Journal of the United States Information Agency: The U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda, Foreign Policy and the 1996 Presidential Election*, p. 17. - [https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa\\_oct96.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa_oct96.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> Richman, pp. 18-19.

<sup>135</sup> Wendy S. Ross, 'The Role of Foreign Policy Advisers in Dole, Clinton Campaigns,' in *The Electronic Journal of the United States Information Agency: The U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda, Foreign Policy and the 1996 Presidential Election*, p. 22. - [https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa\\_oct96.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa_oct96.pdf)

<sup>136</sup> David Winston, 'Foreign Policy: The "Stealth" Issue of the 1996 Campaign?' *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 3:1 (1996), p. 285.

<sup>137</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, 'Bob Dole and American Leadership in the World,' Volume 142, Number 97 (Thursday, June 27, 1996), pp. S7110-S7113. - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-1996-06-27/html/CREC-1996-06-27-pt1-PgH6987.htm>

such as Truman and Reagan, affirmed America's right to self-defense against aggression and thus wondered: 'Does the "Clinton Doctrine" provide for the right of self-defense only if it is done covertly by sworn enemies of the United States?'<sup>138</sup> As has been the case during campaigns studied thus far, doctrines are often attributed by critics to define a candidate's position in the beholder's own terms. They are also invoked to prompt a candidate to clearly define their agenda for foreign policy in vivid terms that the polity can glom on to and assess. Republicans were clearly dissatisfied with Clinton's management of certain crises that they argued were undermining American's security, such as Iraq, by focusing on issues which they considered were of little strategic importance, such as humanitarian missions in Haiti and Somalia.<sup>139</sup> Dole claimed that Clinton was unable to assert proper leadership over the direction of foreign policy, and let events get ahead of him in eastern Europe, Somalia, and Haiti. Victory in the Cold War, Dole asserted, was achieved through leadership which understood the importance of American power, but 'Bill Clinton and his advisers didn't understand that then. They don't understand it now.'<sup>140</sup>

As Dole repudiated Clinton's foreign policy, as well as distance himself from George Bush's new world order, the 'Dole Doctrine,' William Safire of *The New York Times* wrote, codified a list of priorities seeking to prevent the domination of Europe by a single power, balancing power in East Asia, and preserving access to natural resources particularly in the Persian Gulf.<sup>141</sup> On coming home from his tour to various areas of the world of strategic interest, such as Russia and the Middle East, Safire suggested Dole 'should enunciate the Dole Doctrine, updated. It's his strong suit.'<sup>142</sup> Dole was soliciting advice from many prominent individuals from the Reagan presidency, including Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Paul

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<sup>138</sup> 'Bob Dole and American Leadership in the World,' pp. S7110-S7113.

<sup>139</sup> Ross, 'The Role of Foreign Policy Advisers in Dole, Clinton Campaigns,' p. 23.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. pp. S7110-S7113.

<sup>141</sup> William Safire, 'Exploring the Dole Doctrine,' *The Berkshire Eagle* (Tuesday, April 2, 1996), p. 11 - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/534165723/?terms=Dole%20doctrine&match=1>

<sup>142</sup> Safire, p. 11.

Wolfowitz, that in many ways made him more sympathetic to viewing the world through more dogmatic outlooks dedicated to advancing America's full-spectrum dominance.<sup>143</sup> In that fashion, Dole told a crowd that, 'It's time to restore American leadership throughout the world. Our future security depends on American leadership that is respected, American leadership that is trusted, and when necessary, American leadership that is feared.'<sup>144</sup>

However, Clinton's foreign policy in the first term did not stray too far away from what Republicans in Congress wanted and/or from the foundations his Republican predecessors laid. Clinton promised to build the bridge to the twenty-first century 'that makes sure we are still the nation with the strongest defense.'<sup>145</sup> Highlighting this continuity in Republican policy, E.J Dionne wrote in 1996 that Clinton's embrace 'of the global economy through trade agreements such as NAFTA and GATT put him on the same side as Newt Gingrich.'<sup>146</sup> Clinton oversaw the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which formed a large trading bloc between Canada, the United States, and Mexico and eliminated many tariffs and trade restrictions between these nations.<sup>147</sup> NAFTA was first signed by George H.W. Bush in 1992.<sup>148</sup> Thus, despite Clinton's victory in the 1996 election, Clinton's conservative opponents in politics and media were partially successful in their efforts to make Clinton beholden to their foreign policy agendas.<sup>149</sup> During the first term,

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<sup>143</sup> Scott N. Romaniuk & Tobias J. Burgers, *The Future of U.S. Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2017). Full spectrum dominance has been a developing feature of the Department of Defense's agenda in the late twenty-first centuries. It refers to the ability of American forces to confront, engage, and defeat adversaries in new security environments along or in tandem with military partners and allies.

<sup>144</sup> Ralph Dannheisser, 'Platforms: How the Parties Define Their Policy Positions,' in in The Electronic Journal of the United States Information Agency: The U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda, Foreign Policy and the 1996 Presidential Election, p. 26. - [https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa\\_oct96.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa_oct96.pdf)."

<sup>145</sup> Anthony Bennett, *The Race for the White House from Reagan to Clinton* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 162.

<sup>146</sup> E. J. Dionne, 'Clinton Swipes the GOP's Lyrics,' *The Washington Post* (July 2<sup>1</sup>, 1996). - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1996/07/21/clinton-swipes-the-gops-lyrics/9c725e88-b5a7-46a5-bb74-8bc12b22795b/>

<sup>147</sup> 'President Bill Clinton – Remarks on the Signing of NAFTA,' (December 8, 1993) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3ooMrgXido>

<sup>148</sup> Juan R. Espana, 'Impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on U.S.-Mexican Trade and Investment Flows,' *Business Economics* 28:3 (1993), 41-47.

<sup>149</sup> For a study on how the G.O.P. co-opted much of Clinton's domestic agenda, see: Haroon A. Khan, 'Determinants of Congressional Support for NAFTA and Clinton's Economic Package,' *The Journal of*

they were proactive in defining Clinton as adrift and lacking the necessary qualities of leadership, such as vision and the will to employ American power unilaterally. His critics did so by constructing a Clinton doctrine that codified these critiques. In the second term, Clinton began to pay more attention to how foreign policy would be communicated.

### **The Clinton Doctrine and the Ascendancy of Liberal Interventionism: 1997-2001**

As Clinton entered his second term, he made certain bureaucratic changes which saw the hiring of people who would become highly influential in the formulation of foreign policy. Former Clinton official, Ivo Daalder, wrote that as Clinton entered his second term, he was ready to be a foreign policy president which made individuals like Madeleine Albright, the ambassador to the United Nations during the first term, and Sandy Berger, the deputy national security adviser during the first term, as ideal advisers due to their more muscular – yet liberal – ideas regarding American foreign policy.<sup>150</sup> During Albright's senate confirmation hearing, she declared that, 'To defeat the dangers and seize the opportunities, we must be more than an audience, more even than actors, we must be the authors of the history of our age.'<sup>151</sup> Albright continued in her speech which outlined why the approach of engagement and enlargement must persist when she proclaimed that, 'It is a central lesson of this century that America must remain a European power. We have an interest in European security, because we wish to avoid the instability that drew five million Americans across the Atlantic to fight in two world wars.'<sup>152</sup>

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*Developing Areas* 38:2 (2005), 143-154; Their success was partial because Clinton was able to pre-empt much Republican opposition through the use of the veto. For this, see: Richard S. Conley, 'President Clinton and the Republican Congress, 1995-2000: Political and Policy Dimensions of Veto Politics in Divided Government,' *Congress & the Presidency* 31:2 (2004), 133-160.

<sup>150</sup> Daalder & Destler, pp. 240-241.

<sup>151</sup> U.S. Department of State, 'Secretary of State-Designate Madeleine K. Albright: Prepared Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,' (Washington D.C., 1997).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

During 1997, a key year in the history of Clinton's foreign policy, Clinton advocated for China's accession to the World Trade Organization to open China's markets for American investment.<sup>153</sup> Clinton facilitated the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the signing of the Hebron Protocol, the Kyoto Protocol was signed which aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change, and Clinton pushed for the enlargement of NATO to include three former Eastern Bloc countries (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic).<sup>154</sup> Another significant development was the arrival onto the international scene of British Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

Although British prime ministers and American presidents tend to have strong working relationships, Blair and Clinton saw eye to eye on many issues ranging from social, economic, and especially foreign policy.<sup>155</sup> This amicability was expressed in a memorandum of the first conversation between the two leaders after the election when Clinton said he 'was really happy' for Blair after his landslide victory to which Blair replied: 'Yes, well you showed the way.'<sup>156</sup> Clinton replied saying that he was sorry for the grief the new P.M. received from the press to which Blair responded: 'That's right. Always the Right attack you and the Left don't defend you.'<sup>157</sup> Soon after the May 1997 British general election, Clinton attended a news conference with Blair in the United Kingdom during which the latter exclaimed that Britain remained dedicated to the NATO project, and agreed with Clinton's

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<sup>153</sup> 'Memorandum of Conversation - President Boris Yeltsin of Russia,' March 21, 1997, *Clinton Digital Library*, pp. 2-3. <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101483>. During a conversation between Russian President Yeltsin and Clinton, the former spoke of how the 'Chinese are now on a new course of reform and democratization, and they're ready to cooperate more with the United States.'

<sup>154</sup> 'President Clinton's Remarks in Bosnia,' (December 22, 1997) *The Clinton Library* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fzzNxKJP2o>

<sup>155</sup> 'Pres. Clinton and P.M. Blair Joint Press Conference (1998)' February 6, 1998. Washington D.C. *The Clinton Library* - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1azFok\\_40c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1azFok_40c).; Richard Carr, *March of the Moderates: Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and the Rebirth of Progressive Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> 'Memorandum of Telephone Conversation - Labour Party Leader and Prime Minister-elect Tony Blair of the United Kingdom,' May 1, 1997, *Clinton Digital Library*, p. 1. - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101495>.

<sup>157</sup> "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation - Labour Party Leader and Prime Minister-elect Tony Blair of the United Kingdom." p. 1.

stance that NATO was central to European defense.<sup>158</sup> During this conference, Blair declared that, ‘But we agreed, too, and have for some time, that this is a new era which calls for a new generation politics and a new generation leadership. This is the generation that prefers reason to doctrine, that is strong in ideals but indifferent to ideology.’<sup>159</sup> During Clinton’s second term, the boundaries of doctrine, ideals, and ideology were rhetorically tested as both leaders faced growing international crises, including engaging Iraq and the Kosovo conflict.

### The Clinton Doctrine in the Second Term: Battle of Narratives

Daalder and I. M Destler, both of whom had been influential within the Democratic Party’s foreign policy establishment, wrote that with the promotion of Berger to national security adviser, Berger made effective communications strategy central to his job. For example, he would ‘make calls to key senators and representatives, often as many as six or eight a day. He would go up and meet with chairs of committees, or talk to one of the caucuses, and make the administration’s case.’<sup>160</sup> Some argue that these changes were part of Clinton’s desire to rid himself of idealist advisers, and shift towards a more assertive approach to foreign policy.<sup>161</sup> On March 27, 1997, Berger gave a speech during which he praised America’s farsighted leadership that secured victory in the Cold War and how America now stood at another time to – again – be farsighted in its grand strategic thinking as it was during that epoch.<sup>162</sup> Containment, Berger charged, was ‘now obsolete. Instead, this new time increasingly is

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<sup>158</sup> ‘The President’s News Conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom in London,’ Thursday, May 29, *Public Papers of the President of the United States, William J Clinton. Presidential Document. 1997*, p. 672.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 672.

<sup>160</sup> Daalder & Destler, p. 242.

<sup>161</sup> Terry Deibel, *Clinton and Congress: The Politics of Foreign Policy* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 2000), p. 28; Rosanna Perotti (ed.), *Presidency in the United States: Foreign Policy in the Clinton Administration* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019), pp. xi-xii.

<sup>162</sup> Samuel R. Berger, ‘A Foreign Policy Agenda for the Second Term’ at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., March 27, 1997. *The Clinton White House Archives* - <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/html/speeches/032797speech.html>

shaped by the forces of integration.’<sup>163</sup> However, Berger claimed, the dialogue of foreign policy has been frozen in the rhetoric of ‘the Post-Cold War Era.’<sup>164</sup> ‘I come here today,’ he continued, ‘not only to praise the “Post-Cold War Era” but to bury it. That phrase describes what has ended, not what is beginning.’<sup>165</sup>

Berger declared America must be dedicated to three strategic goals: working for an undivided, peaceful, and democratic Europe through NATO enlargement and forging a partnership with Russia; second, to build an integrated Asia-Pacific community through more open trade with China and Japan and continuing American security engagement; and thirdly, ‘to neither shrink from – nor become enthralled by – the inescapable reality that America can often be the decisive force for peace in the world.’<sup>166</sup> Not once did Berger use the term ‘doctrine’ in this speech. Thus, although in the second term foreign policy initiatives were to be rationalized as constituting consistent expressions of the aforementioned binding strategic priorities, the Clinton administration purposefully resisted the doctrinal frame. Conversely, certain proponents of Clinton in the media sought to give Clinton’s foreign policy more favourable definition by creating a doctrine on his behalf.

On December 27, 1997, *The Post* commentator E.J. Dionne wrote that Clinton had to keep troops in Bosnia since he could not set a new date for their withdrawal because ‘already he has had to back off from an old date.’<sup>167</sup> Doing so, Dionne claimed, was a ‘bow to public and congressional sentiment rather than an expression of policy, but this time the White House would suffer ‘an even greater loss of credibility if it made another promise it could not keep.’<sup>168</sup> In turn, with Clinton deciding to keep troops stationed in Bosnia, Dionne wrote:

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<sup>163</sup> Berger.

<sup>164</sup> Berger.

<sup>165</sup> Berger.

<sup>166</sup> Berger.

<sup>167</sup> E. J. Dionne, ‘In Bosnia, the Clinton Doctrine at Work,’ *Tampa Bay Times* (December 27, 1997), p. 19. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/326806646/?terms=Clinton%20Doctrine&match=1>

<sup>168</sup> Dionne, p. 19

‘Welcome to the Clinton Doctrine. It involves avoiding war, but using American troops in modest numbers in many places to create space for democracy (as in Haiti) or to keep warring factions from fighting again (as in Bosnia).’<sup>169</sup> ‘It’s a doctrine that can’t be applied everywhere,’ Dionne maintained, but ‘in Bosnia, at least, the doctrine is working in its modest and limited way. And that’s why Clinton had to keep the troops there.’<sup>170</sup>

Recollecting to the author about writing this article, Dionne remembered that, ‘Critics of Clinton, particularly from the Reaganite perspective, were arguing either there was no coherence to his foreign policy or that his foreign policy was entirely economic policy.’<sup>171</sup> In turn, Dionne said,

What people on the sort of liberal side of politics were trying to do was to say that intervening in circumstances like this was not inconsistent with the view that other forms of American intervention, like Vietnam, had been mistaken. So, the creation of a doctrine there was trying to rationalize as best and – I’ll say – *we* could since I am clearly now complicit in trying to push a doctrine [laughter]... to try to create a coherent rationale for a set of responses which critics might look at and say were contradictory. So, I strongly suspect that when I wrote that column, I had my friend Charles in my head as someone I disagreed with and said wait a minute, you said there was coherence to Reagan, I am going to make a case that there is coherence to Clinton.<sup>172</sup>

This recollection regarding the aforementioned article is a clear reflection of the inherently politicized nature of identifying and defining a presidential doctrine. Dionne’s attempt to

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<sup>169</sup> Dionne, p. 19.

<sup>170</sup> Dionne, p. 19.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with E.J. Dionne, November 20, 2023. Dionne was referring to columnist Charles Krauthammer.

construct and define a Clinton doctrine was partially done to counter the critics of Clinton who continuously argued that there was no consistency and coherence to Clinton's foreign policy.<sup>173</sup>

Dionne attempted to do for Clinton what Charles Krauthammer had done for Reagan; that being to popularize a specific definitional understanding about the president's policy choices which rationalized them according to a broader and legitimate doctrine. However, the right-wing press were consistent in their scrutiny and cynicism of Clinton's leadership due to their scepticism about Clinton's priorities and how he chose them. Krauthammer – himself – took pen to paper in June 1998, when he criticized 'Clinton's Doctrine of Passivity,' as was the title of his piece in the *Chicago Tribune*, in relation to the administration's approach to Iraq.<sup>174</sup> Krauthammer undermined Clinton's presidential leadership in this piece when he rhetorically asked: 'Why can't an American president simply stand up and say we act not for the world but ourselves?' Krauthammer claimed that the world would benefit from 'thwarting the likes of Saddam' but America has 'lost faith in the rightness of our cause – hence the addiction to multilateralism.'<sup>175</sup>

In turn, Krauthammer wrote that the administration came into office pledged to aggressive multilateralism, but that it was abandoned after the debacle in Somalia, and it was 'now back in full force. Except that the Clinton Doctrine today is more properly termed "passive multilateralism."' <sup>176</sup> Comparing this to how Krauthammer flatteringly wrote about the Reagan doctrine in his praise for Reagan's moral foreign policy choices in the crusade

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<sup>173</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, *145 Cong. Rec. S3039 – The Situation in Kosovo* (Washington D.C., March 22, 1999), S3039 - <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-1999-03-22/CREC-1999-03-22-pt1-PgS3039>. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Texas) raised a concern in Congress regarding the role of NATO when she said it was being turned into an aggressor under Clinton and asserted that 'the difference between the Clinton Doctrine and the Reagan Doctrine is that President Reagan would support freedom fighters with arms, with monetary contributions, with intelligence – many, many forms of support for freedom fighters – but he would never put a U.S. military person in the middle of a civil war.'

<sup>174</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'Clinton's Doctrine of Passivity,' *Chicago Tribune* (June 15, 1998), p. 15. - <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1998-06-15-9806150013-story.html>

<sup>175</sup> Krauthammer, p. 15.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

against global communism underscores two important points. Firstly, it reflects how rhetorically useful he saw presidential doctrines to shape the narrative about presidential leadership in foreign policy. As Dionne attested, Krauthammer's doing so prompted his liberal counterparts to attempt to construct a doctrine for Clinton in their attempt to define the latter in terms which sustained his narrative justifying his choices. Secondly, that no matter if Clinton engaged in actions which the right endorsed, such as going after Saddam which he did in cohort with Great Britain in December 1998 with Operation Desert Fox, his leadership over such actions was never good enough.<sup>177</sup>

### Legitimizing and Delegitimizing Intervention in Kosovo: The Discursive Role of Doctrine

The 1999 Kosovo War was a major conflict in the Balkans region, involving the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a separatist group seeking independence for Kosovo, a province within Yugoslavia.

Throughout Clinton's presidency, American and NATO forces were heavily involved in the Balkan region as violence often escalated between the various ethnic groups; in the case of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, it escalated into ethnic cleansing.<sup>178</sup> In June 1998, Clinton issued Executive Order 13088 which imposed sanctions on the republic of Yugoslavia,

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<sup>177</sup> Presidential News Conference, December 16, 1997, *C-Span* - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?96979-1/presidential-news-conference>; Robert A. Manning & Patrick Clawson, 'The Clinton Doctrine,' *The Wall Street Journal* (December 29, 1997) - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB88333392332806000>. Robert Manning and Patrick Clawson of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote that 'in the end, foreign policy is the president's responsibility' and, in turn, asked: 'So, what's the Clinton Doctrine? [...] The continued tensions with Iraq and the interminable intervention in Bosnia,' the authors wrote, 'raise the fear that this president's doctrine may be: We only intervene when there is no vital national security interest, particularly if a domestic special-interest group supports it and the risk of casualties is low.'

<sup>178</sup> Thomas H. Henriksen (ed), *Cycles in U.S. Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 119. Henriksen argued that, 'In his initial approach to the European tinderbox, Bill Clinton merely followed in the slipstream of his predecessor. George Bush Sr. avoided the breakup of Yugoslavia as if it were a medieval plague. The bloody turmoil, nevertheless, was not in a faraway place like Somalia, Haiti, or Rwanda. It could not be brushed aside, for it lay in the center of Eastern Europe and bumped up against member states within the NATO—America's premier alliance... Humanitarian tragedy it was, but it held strategic consequences, which neither Somalia, nor Haiti, or Rwanda did.'; John Norris (ed), *Collision Course: NATO, Russia, and Kosovo* (Washington: Bloomsbury, 2005).

Serbia, and Montenegro in response to the humanitarian situation in Kosovo.<sup>179</sup> Despite this, galvanizing support for intervention was still a weighty task. A memorandum for President Clinton from National Security Adviser Samuel Berger, dated on September 24, 1998, read that although a United Nations' resolution helps to 'create the political basis for the use of force,' it was not without its political and military risks.<sup>180</sup> One of those risks, Berger wrote, was securing congressional support since most members 'and the public have limited interest in Kosovo.'<sup>181</sup> The main justification for NATO's war in Kosovo, which began on March 24, 1999, was the humanitarian crisis as widespread reports of human rights abuses committed by Yugoslav forces against the ethnic Albanian population led to an international outcry as well as a refugee crisis.<sup>182</sup>

A NATO press release from January 30, 1999, read that the crisis in Kosovo 'remains a threat to peace and security in the region. NATO's strategy is to halt the violent and support the completion of negotiations on an interim political settlement for Kosovo, thus averting a humanitarian catastrophe.'<sup>183</sup> Further, it stated that the council agreed that NATO 'may authorize air strikes against targets on F.R.Y. territory. NATO will take all appropriate measures in case of a failure by the Kosovar Albanian side to comply with the demands of the international community.'<sup>184</sup> Clinton authorized the use of force in Kosovo in late March 1999.<sup>185</sup> The intervention in Kosovo was legitimated by Clinton himself to 'deter an even

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<sup>179</sup> The White House, *Executive Order 13088 of June 9, 1998* (Washington D.C., 1998), p 32109. – <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-1999-title3-vol1/html/CFR-1999-title3-vol1-ec13088.htm#:~:text=13088%20Executive%20Order%2013088%20Presidential,Serbia%20in%20Response%20to%20the>

<sup>180</sup> 'Declassified Documents concerning Kosovo. Memorandum for the President from Samuel Berger,' September 24, 1998, *Clinton Digital Library*, p. 1. - <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16195>

<sup>181</sup> 'Declassified Documents concerning Kosovo. Memorandum for the President from Samuel Berger,' pp. 2-3.

<sup>182</sup> Ivo Daalder & Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. viii.

<sup>183</sup> NATO Press and Media Service, Press Release (99) 12, 'Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Kosovo,' January 30, 1999, *NATO Online Archive* – [https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/4/144993/PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_99\\_12\\_ENG.pdf](https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/4/144993/PRESS_RELEASE_99_12_ENG.pdf)

<sup>184</sup> NATO Press and Media Service, Press Release (99) 12.

<sup>185</sup> 'Memorandum of Conversation with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana,' April 22, 1999, *Clinton Digital Library*, p. 2. <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/118886>

bloodier offensive against innocent civilians in Kosovo' being committed by Serbian forces.<sup>186</sup> These domestic criticisms were buttressed by international outcry over the fact NATO did not receive a United Nations Security Council resolution to intervene to resolve a humanitarian disaster never mind try to build a new nation.<sup>187</sup> The phrase 'illegal but legitimate' endorsed the view that the war was legitimized on moral grounds.<sup>188</sup>

On April 22, 1999, Tony Blair gave a speech at the Chicago Economic Club titled 'Doctrine of the International Community.'<sup>189</sup> Though Blair was a vocal supporter of intervention in Kosovo, but had earlier stated that the type of politics being embarked upon by him and Clinton preferred reason to doctrine, Blair spoke of how the Second World War had rendered the doctrine of isolationism as untenable.<sup>190</sup> In turn, the current intervention was a manifestation of 'a new doctrine of international community.'<sup>191</sup> 'By this I mean,' Blair stated, 'the explicit recognition that today, more than ever before, we are mutually dependent. That national interest is, to a significant extent, governed by international collaboration. And that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction of this doctrine.'<sup>192</sup> Despite having made similar advocations, the Clinton administration resisted the term 'doctrine' throughout its time in office, but Blair embraced it. Blair's speech, therefore, is significant as it pertains to the history undertaken by this thesis. This is because in 1999, the U.S. was the superpower, not Britain. In a way, though Clinton and his officials had articulated similar pronouncements since 1993, such a doctrinal statement produced at the bookend of the

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<sup>186</sup> AP Archive, 'U.S.A.: Kosovo Crisis: Bill Clinton on NATO Attacks,' March 25, 1999. – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrcOWkGCbas>

<sup>187</sup> John Yoo, 'U.N. Wars, U.S. War Powers,' *Berkeley Law* 1:1 (2000), 355-373 (p. 356). In Kosovo, John Yoo argued that NATO's goals included not just ending war 'but building a new nation.'

<sup>188</sup> Fernando G. Nunez-Mietz, 'Legalization and the Legitimation of the Use of Force: Revisiting Kosovo,' *International Organisation* 72:1 (2018), 725-757 (p. 726).

<sup>189</sup> The Economic Club of Chicago, 'The Right Honorable Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Great Britain, 4/22/99 (Excerpt). April 22, 1999. – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lqc2MqbhPt0>

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

twentieth century could have been Clinton's to make.<sup>193</sup> What this reflects is Blair's belief that America was of central importance to Britain and, as the only superpower, it was central to world security.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, 'he opted to "hug them close."'<sup>195</sup> To have influence over the American president, one had to convince him one was on his side.<sup>196</sup>

Like Clinton, Blair was a man of the third way, a man of 'pragmatism over abstract principle.'<sup>197</sup> Usually, a pragmatic politician stands in contrast to the conviction politician, like Margaret Thatcher, who 'is guided by a clear doctrine, ideology, or set of beliefs. When a new challenge appears, he looks to this doctrine or ideology to determine his response.'<sup>198</sup> In his relationship with the United States, Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, wrote the former 'believed there was no earthly point in taking an ambivalent position' toward American administrations.<sup>199</sup> In the interventions of Kosovo in 1999, and Iraq in 2003, Blair was a central figure.<sup>200</sup> This centrality manifested not necessarily in the American decision-making process to use force, but in how the decisions to do so were legitimized internationally. Sidney Blumenthal, senior adviser to the president from 1997-2001, wrote that, 'It was not until the election of Tony Blair as Britain's prime minister in 1997 that the

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<sup>193</sup> PREM 49/2352. Letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair from Samuel R. Berger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. January 17, 2001. Records of the Prime Minister's Office, The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive Website. Upon leaving office, Berger wrote to Blair thanking him for his role in strengthening the special relationship. –

[https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?\\_q=Tony+blair&\\_sd=1992&\\_ed=2004&\\_hb=tna](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Tony+blair&_sd=1992&_ed=2004&_hb=tna)

<sup>194</sup> Jonathan Powell, *The New Machiavelli: How to Wield Power in the Modern World* (London: The Bodley Head, 2010), p. 262.

<sup>195</sup> Powell, p. 262.

<sup>196</sup> Powell, p. 262.

<sup>197</sup> Julian Baggini, 'Blair's Philosophy,' *The Guardian* (January 12, 2006) –

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/jan/12/publicservices.politics>

<sup>198</sup> Malcolm Rifkind, *Power and Pragmatism: The Memoirs of Malcolm Rifkind* (New York: Biteback Publishing, 2016), p. 2.

<sup>199</sup> Powell, p. 261.

<sup>200</sup> PREM 49/2352. Confidential. From Private Secretary. Subject: Foreign Secretary's Conversation with Secretary Designate Powell, January 18, 2001, pp. 1-4. Records of the Prime Minister's Office, The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive Website. Colin Powell told the British he had conversed with Secretary-designate Donald Rumsfeld about the Balkans as the new administration 'hoped to push the review through the machine quickly. Powell thought that HMG would not be shocked by their likely conclusions. The U.S. did not want to be accused of cutting and running.' –

[https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?\\_q=Tony+blair&\\_sd=1992&\\_ed=2004&\\_hb=tna](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Tony+blair&_sd=1992&_ed=2004&_hb=tna)

global imperatives of Clinton's politics began at last to come into focus.'<sup>201</sup> Clinton and Blair's politics, Blumenthal wrote, 'were incremental and empirical, not defined by large ideological doctrines.'<sup>202</sup>

Consequently, in his Chicago speech, Blair argued that the United Nations needed to be reformed to make it more capable of intervening in cases of humanitarian catastrophe since vetoes from big players constrained the ability to intervene.<sup>203</sup> Thus, Blair's communicatory U-turn from his earlier statement that he and Clinton were part of a generation preferring reason to doctrine, at this moment, underscored the concerted effort to rationalize the Kosovo intervention as part of a broader way of thinking about how states in the international community should act in the post-Cold War world, but also his way to assert more alignment with how American policymakers at this time viewed the world. For example, Ivo Daalder wrote that NATO went to war in Yugoslavia to prevent Serbian political domination over Kosovo and the wider region.<sup>204</sup> Strobe Talbott, Clinton's undersecretary of state for east European affairs at the time, sustained this opinion when he posited that Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader, 'had been so adroit at outmanoeuvring the West that NATO came to view the ever-escalating use of force as its only option.'<sup>205</sup> Further, Talbott wrote that 'it was Yugoslavia's resistance to the broader trends of political and economic reform – not the plight of Kosovar Albanians – that best explains NATO's war.'<sup>206</sup> Talbott thus argued that, 'By going to war against Milosevic, the West was reiterating a principle that had been taking shape for several years: the sovereignty of individual states is not absolute.'<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Blumenthal, p. 298.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>203</sup> Powell, p. 264.

<sup>204</sup> Daalder & O'Hanlon, p. 2.

<sup>205</sup> John Norris (ed), *Collision Course: NATO, Russia, and Kosovo* (Washington: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. xxiii.

<sup>206</sup> Norris (ed), p. xxiii. Economic 'shock therapy,' as the swift mass privatization of state property in former eastern bloc states came to be known, was being implemented with American oversight in Russia with full force during this time.

<sup>207</sup> Norris, pp. x-xi.

In this light, Blair's framing of the Kosovo intervention as having spawned out of a new global doctrine can be viewed as an attempt to rhetorically repudiate, on behalf of transatlantic strategic interests, non-interventionism since the actions of rogue rulers abroad could now have consequences at home in the growingly interconnected and globalized world.<sup>208</sup> Global decision makers needed not to consider practical and strategic considerations when confronted with rogue rulers engaging in crimes against humanity; they must confront them. In his memoir, Blair posited that at one level, the public understand the need for the big international picture, but at another the summits and banquets seem so remote.<sup>209</sup> 'What you come to realize as a leader,' Blair wrote, 'is that although this feeling may be understandable, it is also wrong. The very nature of the interdependence makes it so. Globalization pushes people together...The phrase "global community" is a cliché, but it's also true. It's the way we live now.'<sup>210</sup>

Clinton had made these arguments during his presidency, but when it came to Kosovo, elements within the American press both criticized these rationalizations for intervention and demanded Clinton distinguish what his doctrine defined now that the decision was made to use force. On May 5, 1999, Tom Brokaw, a journalist from N.B.C., said to Clinton that his 'critics say the Clinton doctrine is: We bomb the small countries, Iraq and Kosovo, but when the big countries begin to give us trouble, we turn the other way.'<sup>211</sup> Clinton replied saying that,

Well, first of all, I think that's apples and oranges. The Soviet Union spied on us all during the Cold War. I don't recall President Truman or President Eisenhower or

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<sup>208</sup> Powell, p. 264.

<sup>209</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Arrow Books, 2011), p. 225.

<sup>210</sup> Blair, p. 225.

<sup>211</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J Clinton (1999, Book I). Budget and Presidential Materials.* May 5, 1999, pp. 695-698.

President Kennedy or President Johnson or President Nixon ever considering bombing Russia because of espionage... NATO here has the capacity to stop and, I believe, to reverse ethnic cleansing.<sup>212</sup>

Though Clinton was defending the principle of stopping ethnic cleansing, he refused to get bogged down in a definitional debate over what his doctrine meant or to even confirm its existence as such. Over a month later, C.N.N.'s Wolf Blitzer, on June 20, 1999, asked: 'Mr. President, some of your aides are now talking about a Clinton doctrine in foreign policy, in the aftermath of this war against Yugoslavia. Is there, in your mind, a Clinton doctrine?'<sup>213</sup> Clinton responded by saying that there was an important principle to be upheld which was the international community, including the United States, NATO, and the United Nations, have a responsibility to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing wherever possible, whether the violence occurs within a nation's borders or beyond.<sup>214</sup> Some disagree as to whether, in the case of this interview, Clinton affirmed the existence of a doctrine or not. Bartram Brown argued that Clinton 'confirmed that, in his view, a new "Clinton Doctrine" was emerging.'<sup>215</sup> On the other hand, Heiko Meiertons argued that during the C.N.N. interview, 'when asked directly, President Clinton did not confirm the emergence of such a Clinton Doctrine.'<sup>216</sup>

Rather than a doctrine per se, Clinton suggested it was a moral principle being upheld by his choice to use force in Kosovo; that being if there are humanitarian abuses being undertaken by a regime then the world should come together to stop it. Thus, even when discussing the president's principled response to a cataclysmic event which implicitly put

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., pp. 695-698.

<sup>213</sup> 'President Clinton Talks with "Late Edition,"' *Clinton White House Digital* (June 20, 1999) – <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/New/html/19990620c.html>

<sup>214</sup> 'President Clinton Talks with "Late Edition."'

<sup>215</sup> Bartram S. Brown, 'Humanitarian Intervention at a Crossroads,' *William & Mary Law Review* 41:5 (1999-2000), pp. 1691. – <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1536&context=wmlr&seidir=1>

<sup>216</sup> Meiertons, p. 178.

prospective ethnic cleansers on notice of America's learnt lessons from the Balkan issue, Clinton did not publicly wish to confer it as a doctrine. Just over a month after Clinton's C.N.N interview, during an interview with Sandy Berger on July 25, 1999, Doyle McManus recalled that since the end of the war in Kosovo, Clinton stated that the international community should act to prevent ethnic cleansing and asked, 'Is this a "Clinton Doctrine?"'<sup>217</sup> Berger replied saying that, 'I instinctively resist doctrine, but I think it is a principle that we have established in Kosovo... That doesn't necessarily mean we have a military response in every situation. We have to have the capacity to act, as the president has indicated.'<sup>218</sup>

These questions posed to Clinton and Berger recall Leslie Gelb's March 1991 periodical criticizing the American practice of seeking to confer doctrines upon any foreign policy decision when he wrote that, 'We refuse to rest until we possess one lens through which to view the world and one answer for all challenges.'<sup>219</sup> What the president's and his national security adviser's responses show is that they were not comfortable in becoming definitionally associated with a presidential doctrine; largely because doing so would have opened up space for further charges of inconsistency and contradiction in their decisions to use force which – as has been shown – were constantly made throughout the presidency.<sup>220</sup>

Clinton's responses to Brokaw and Blitzer demonstrate a nuanced position that prioritized the ethical imperative to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing while avoiding the

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<sup>217</sup> Doyle McManus, 'Samuel Berger,' *Los Angeles Times* (July 25, 1999) – <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-jul-25-op-59356-story.html>

<sup>218</sup> McManus.

<sup>219</sup> Leslie Gelb, 'New World Order or Law and Order: The Bush Doctrine Sees U.S. As World Policeman,' *The Miami Herald* (March 20, 1991), p. 143. – <https://www.newspapers.com/image/635585965/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>.

<sup>220</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'The Clinton Doctrine,' *Time* (April 5, 1999) – <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,990647,00.html>. 'After all,' Krauthammer wrote, 'if America stands against "ethnic cleansing and the slaughter of innocent people" – the essence of the Clinton Doctrine and the reason American, allied and Serb lives are now being risked over Kosovo – why the utter indifference and silence to the teacup civil wars, far more deadly, brutal and enduring, raging in Sierra Leone, Congo, Sudan, Sri Lanka?[...] The Clinton Doctrine aspires to morality and universality. But foreign policy must be calculating and particular.'

constraints that the endorsement of this principle as a doctrine may have had. This was consistent from the beginning to the end of the administration. Whereas Clinton's political advantage laid in 'casting aspersions on political identities as they had become fixed in his day and in exploiting the political attractions of an unabashedly mongrel third way,' the Republican candidate in 2000, George W. Bush, proposed a completely different leadership posture.<sup>221</sup> A Gallup poll from June 2000 showed that 51% of Americans believed that foreign leaders did not have much respect for Clinton.<sup>222</sup> To overturn such sentiment toward the American president, not only did George W. Bush have a more hawkish foreign policy team advising him in his campaign to secure the presidency against Vice President Al Gore, many of whom during the 1990s had been advocating for a 'neo-Reaganite foreign policy,' he displayed 'an acute sensitivity to the problem of political definition, a view of politics as a struggle for definition, an understanding of leadership as the assertion and control of definitions.'<sup>223</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>221</sup> Skowronek, p. 133.

<sup>222</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, 'Room for Improvement: Americans Give President Mixed Ratings on Foreign Policy,' *Gallup News Service* (June 2, 2000) - <https://news.gallup.com/poll/2851/room-improvement-americans-give-president-mixed-ratings-foreign-policy.aspx>

<sup>223</sup> Skowronek, p. 122; William Kristol & Robert Kagan, 'Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Affairs* 75:4 (1996), 18-32. In this article, the authors praised Reagan's foreign policy for its moral clarity and for the fact that Reagan 'refused to accept the limits on American power imposed by the domestic realities that others assumed were fixed.' As a consequence, its newly acquired unipolar status, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was at risk if it did not adopt a 'neo-Reaganite foreign policy of military supremacy and moral confidence.'; Project for a New American Century, 'Statement of Principles.' June, 1997. - <https://www.rrojasdatabank.info/pfpc/PNAC---statement%20of%20principles.pdf>. Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan – would, in 1997, create a think tank named the *Project for the New American Century* (PNAC), whose founding signatories included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Scooter Libby, and Paul Wolfowitz – each of these individuals served in high-ranking positions of the George W. Bush administration. PNAC's stated objectives were to increase defense spending, challenge hostile regimes, and 'accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.'

This chapter has analyzed how the debates over the definition of the Clinton doctrine facilitated and undermined the legitimation of Clinton's policy choices. Despite Clinton providing consistent indications as to where he wanted American global power to be utilized in the new post-Cold War era, such as expanding the number of market democracies or to intervene in cases of humanitarian crises, its criteria for executing these initiatives never took the form of a doctrine. From its inheritance of the Somalian mission when it came into office in 1993 up to the Kosovo intervention in 1999, the administration resisted framing its decisions as arising out of a presidential doctrine.

This was because in foreign policy, while Clinton was a product of a generation which was heavily influenced by pragmatism and measuring America's abilities and resources to globally spread liberal values. Clinton's approach to politics was to avoid becoming associated with rigid orthodoxies to allow him to stand above the ideologies of the left and the right so he could alter his rationalization to suit the circumstances at hand. In turn, broader perceptions about the existence of an operative Clinton doctrine, or lack thereof, were largely defined by actors seeking to construct such a doctrine in a way which undermined the legitimation of Clinton's foreign policy choices in two main ways. Firstly, it was mainly conservative writers and Republican legislators who defined the doctrine to codify a policy practice or presidential statement in ways which undermined the administration's narratives justifying what was being done and why; they mainly did so by identifying inconsistencies between their definitional understanding of the doctrine and the choices embarked upon. Secondly, by demanding the administration to consistently clarify its position, such as the conditions upon which it was using force, by declaring such an axiom that opponents could glom on to scrutinize. The next chapter on the Bush doctrine provides not only a stark contrast to how the Clinton administration rhetorically resisted doctrine in the framing of its foreign policy approach, but also the extent to which the Reagan and first Bush

administrations did so, too. The language of doctrine for George W. Bush became a core rhetorical component of his administration's legitimation effort.

## Chapter 5

### **The Bush Doctrine and the Legitimation of the War on Terror**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores how the rhetorical use of the Bush doctrine facilitated and undermined the legitimation of George W. Bush's foreign policy choices throughout his presidency from 2001 to 2009. Aiden Warren and Joseph Siracusa argued that the term 'doctrine' reattained 'charged prominence in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.'<sup>1</sup> Compared to the three preceding presidencies, the rhetorical use of the term 'doctrine' took on new life during the presidency of George W. Bush due to the frequency with which the label 'Bush doctrine,' and the term 'doctrine' more broadly were disseminated in the discourse and rhetorically evoked and appealed to by the president and Vice President Dick Cheney.<sup>2</sup> Their use of this language was to facilitate the legitimation of certain principles and policy practices through continually presenting the doctrine – explicitly and implicitly – as a necessary repudiation of purportedly redundant policy frameworks in the post-9/11 milieu that the administration would redress through the doctrine.

Those principles and policy practices associated with the doctrine changed depending on which line of action the administration was rationalizing in the moment, such as diplomacy or military action, but they often included: making no distinction between terrorists and those who harboured them; pre-empting threats before they could attack America.; and to advance democracy as part of a freedom agenda to replace repressive

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<sup>1</sup> Aiden Warren & Joseph M. Siracusa, *Understanding Presidential Doctrines: U.S. National Security from George Washington to Joe Biden* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Noam Chomsky on Hegemony or Survival (2004), *Manufacturing Intellect* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lIZQN0DA4M>. Noam Chomsky noticed in 2004 that the Bush doctrine, more so than any other so-called doctrine, happens to be 'unusually prominent, clearly articulated...and widely discussed to an unusual extent.'

regimes.<sup>3</sup> The significance of this, as it pertains to the aims of this thesis, lies in the unique impact of the Bush doctrine, which goes beyond its predecessors; not in relation to its principles and policies, since these were not unique to the Bush administration as some claim, but in the relative frequency with which the doctrinal concept was rhetorically appealed to.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will be structured into three main sections. The first section will explore the Bush campaign's foreign policy ideas and trace the birth of the Bush doctrine as a discursive item during the 2000 presidential election campaign. It will then go into a discussion of how the doctrine was being defined after Bush won the election, but before 9/11. The second section will delve into the rhetorical utilization of the Bush doctrine during the first term. It will examine how it was invoked, defined, and used as both a legitimating tool for the administration's foreign policy decisions, particularly in the context of the War on Terror, as well as a cudgel by opponents of the administration's policies who sought to superimpose their own definition in their scrutiny of the president's decisions. The third section will evaluate how, during Bush's second term as challenges in the War on Terror mounted, the Bush administration faced heavy media and congressional criticism, including questions about the perceived threats communicated in their doctrinal discourse.

### **The 2000 Presidential Election**

Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay argued that during Bush's 2000 campaign, it was hard to determine what Bush believed America's role in the world should be.<sup>5</sup> Bush was judged by

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<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (Texas: Virgin Books, 2011), p. 396.

<sup>4</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018), p. 187; Melvyn P. Leffler, '9/11 in Retrospect: George W. Bush's Grand Strategy, Reconsidered,' *Foreign Affairs* 90:5 (2011). - [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23041774.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3A0f897e76079f94795736fdae21e910c9&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23041774.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3A0f897e76079f94795736fdae21e910c9&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1). 9/11 did alter the focus of the administration, but the administration's approach 'was less transformative than contemporaries thought. Much of it was consistent with long-term trends in U.S. foreign policy.'

<sup>5</sup> Ivo Daalder & James Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. (Washington: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), p. 35.

his contemporaries, particularly in the press, as highly inexperienced in foreign policy as compared to Al Gore, Bill Clinton's vice president, against whom Bush ran in the 2000 election.<sup>6</sup> Lack of experience in this realm of policy was counteracted by Bush hiring a team of foreign policy experts, who Condoleezza Rice – Bush's would-be national security adviser – referred to as the 'Vulcans.'<sup>7</sup> This group included individuals who had served in varying capacities within the George H.W. Bush administration, such as Rice, Dick Cheney, and Paul Wolfowitz. During an interview for this study, Chase Untermeyer, a close friend of Bush sr. and who served as the second Bush's ambassador to Qatar, told the author that,

I believe, I don't know for a fact, that the reason Richard Cheney was chosen to be Bush's vice president is a belief by the first President Bush that his son needed to have someone very skilled, very knowledgeable, very respected in the field of national security and that was Cheney. By inviting Cheney into his government, he got some other people who proved to be very dynamic forces in foreign policy in that second Bush administration, namely Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz.<sup>8</sup>

This dynamic and experienced group provided the younger Bush with advice, expertise, and guidance within the contexts of their own hawkish and neoconservative ideas (more on which later) about the application of American power abroad.<sup>9</sup> Karl Rove, Bush's political strategist, recalled that during the campaign the Bush team sought to pitch to the press and

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<sup>6</sup> CNN, 'Bush Lacks Gore's Foreign Policy Expertise,' June 24, 1999 -

<https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/06/24/president.2000/foreign.policy/>

<sup>7</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 248-260.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Jim Mann, 'China Gives Clues on GOP Rivals,' *The Los Angeles Times* (March 1, 2000), p. 125. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/161325784/?match=1&terms=Bush%20foreign%20policy%20advisors>.

Bush had little direct experience in foreign policy and his way of counteracting the problem 'has been to collect a long list of experienced foreign policy advisers – most of whom, such as Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard L. Armitage and Robert Zoellick, worked for presidents Reagan and Bush.'

the Republican Party that ‘this guy is going to be a substantive guy.’<sup>10</sup> Rove suggested that there were questions about his substantiveness on defense and foreign affairs and that Bush was very interested in what purpose the military would have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; the many meetings held by the Bush team on foreign policy revolved around identifying a sense of purpose in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world.<sup>11</sup>

One of the key themes of Bush’s foreign policy positions during the election was a focus on rebuilding America’s military strength and readiness. Bush argued that America needed a strong and capable military to defend its interests around the world, and that the Clinton administration had neglected the military in favour of other priorities, such as nation-building and furthering multilateralism.<sup>12</sup> Bush and his team argued that America’s power and ‘the willingness to wield it, even over the objection of others, is the key to securing America’s interests in the world.’<sup>13</sup> In 1999, Bush declared that a president ‘must be a clear-eyed realist’ and establish a vision of a ‘distinctly American internationalism.’<sup>14</sup> In this light, although the Clinton administration was more than willing to use force, Bush’s foreign policy from the outset was determined to be more unilateral in its posturing.

During the campaign, Bush was determined to not let his opponents define his political identity and positions in their own terms. He claimed they had done so during his first congressional race, after which Bush ‘learned that allowing your opponent to define you is one of the biggest mistakes you can make.’<sup>15</sup> During an interview in January 2000 with C.B.S. News before the New Hampshire primary, the interviewer brought up the Republican

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<sup>10</sup> Miller Center: University of Virginia, George W. Bush Oral History Project, Final Edited Transcript, Interview 1 With Karl Rove. June 11-12, 2013, Washington, D.C., Participants: Russell Riley, Sidney Milkis, Barbara Perry, pp. 32-33. - [https://s3.amazonaws.com/web.poh.transcripts/Rove\\_Karl1.final2.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/web.poh.transcripts/Rove_Karl1.final2.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Miller Center interview 1 with Karl Rove, pp. 32-33.

<sup>12</sup> CNN, ‘Bush Lays Out Foreign Policy Vision,’ November 19, 1999 - <https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/11/19/bush.speech/>

<sup>13</sup> Daalder & Lindsay, *America Unbound*, p. 40. Wolfowitz, a Vulcan, had articulated these ideas in the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance document under Bush sr.

<sup>14</sup> CNN, ‘Bush Lays Out Foreign Policy Vision,’ (November 19, 1999) - <https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/11/19/bush.speech/>

<sup>15</sup> Bush, p. 41.

candidate John McCain's charges against Bush claiming that the latter was a product of a declining establishment and would be an ineffectual leader. Bush responded that he was a Texan, not from the Washington establishment, and was able to exert strong leadership through the 'setting of agendas.'<sup>16</sup> He would repeat this line about agenda setting numerous times during the 2000 presidential debate with Gore in efforts to present himself as a strong leader.<sup>17</sup> In Bush's 2000 campaign book, *A Charge to Keep*, Bush asserted that he would lead by definition in that he would not let anybody else define him as they had throughout his life in referring to his privilege, being an outsider, and a product of the north-eastern establishment.<sup>18</sup> Though this book did not contain much detail about the policies he would enact, he elevated the importance of a leader controlling the political definition of their decisions and advanced his authority on the grounds of stated purposes and 'public displays of unwavering commitment.'<sup>19</sup>

In February 2000, Rice wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* titled 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest' in which she argued the 'process of outlining a new foreign policy must begin by recognizing that the United States is in a remarkable position.'<sup>20</sup> Rice argued that America must help to widen global trends of economic openness, democracy, and individual liberty by 'maintaining a disciplined and consistent foreign policy that separates the important from the trivial' which the Clinton administration had failed to do.<sup>21</sup> America, Rice wrote, 'has found it exceedingly difficult to define its "national interest" in the absence

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<sup>16</sup> CBS News, 'Gov. George W. Bush Before the 2000 NH Primary on Face the Nation,' January 30, 2000. - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92JDD\\_5EF9k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92JDD_5EF9k)

<sup>17</sup> PBS NewsHour, 'Bush vs. Gore: The First 2000 Presidential Debate,' October 3, 2000 - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwQBeMUj\\_ps](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwQBeMUj_ps)

<sup>18</sup> George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (Washington D.C: Morrow, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Skowronek (ed), *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 94 & 131. The strategic potency of 'definition as a leadership stance worked prospectively for Bush as well as retrospectively. It targeted the difficulties Vice President Al Gore faced in upholding the Clinton legacy while convincing people that he was really, in his phrase, "his own man."'

<sup>20</sup> Condoleezza Rice, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest,' *Foreign Affairs* (2000), p. 46. - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20049613>.

<sup>21</sup> Rice, p. 46.

of Soviet power. That we do not know how to think about what follows the U.S.-Soviet confrontation is clear from the continued references to the “post-Cold War period.”<sup>22</sup> Rice disagreed with the peace-keeping missions in the Balkans because they were distractions from America’s strategic interests in the Gulf and Taiwan straits. During the 2000 debate between Bush and Gore, the former criticized the Clinton administration’s numerous interventions to promote democracy, such as in Somalia, Haiti, and in the Balkans. Bush said that he did not believe American troops should be used for ‘nation-building.’<sup>23</sup> Bush declared that, ‘I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow a dictator when it’s in our best interests’ and he would not have supported the uses of force in Haiti and Kosovo.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, Robert Zoellick, Bush’s would-be Trade Representative and Undersecretary of State, in his ‘Campaign 2000: A Republican Foreign Policy’ wrote that ‘America’s leadership in the next century requires a strong military, wisely used.’<sup>25</sup> Zoellick suggested that America needed a strategy that blended traditional truths with ‘the opportunities of a networked marketplace and a modernized army. It must be realistic about human nature and conflicting interests...America must deploy power wisely, selectively, and consistently to mould an international system that will enhance its influence.’<sup>26</sup> Documents available in the National Archive show that before 9/11, the British thought that the Bush team wanted to pursue a tough internationalist, but realist foreign policy.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Rice, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> AP Archives, ‘USA: Al Gore/George W Bush Campaign Debate,’ October 12, 2000. - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCcKzwj7IXo>

<sup>24</sup> AP Archives, ‘USA: Al Gore/George W Bush Campaign Debate.’

<sup>25</sup> Robert Zoellick, ‘Campaign 2000: A Republican Foreign Policy,’ *Foreign Affairs* (January 1, 2000) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/campaign-2000-republican-foreign-policy>

<sup>26</sup> Zoellick, ‘Campaign 2000.’

<sup>27</sup> PREM 49/1683. Letter written to British Ambassador to the United States Sir Christopher Meyer from Sir Joh Kerr KCMG, The Permanent Under Secretary of State. A Republican Foreign Policy. 20 January 2000, pp. 1-4. Records of the Prime Minister’s Office, The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive Website. The British saw these articles as encouraging as the ‘thinking they expose would throw up some problems, but few really new ones. I suppose this may be a tribute to Clinton/Gore success in “triangulation” – if the White House have already pinched Republican clothes (e.g., on N.M.D. or I.M.F.), maybe it would be naïve to expect the Republican platform to contain surprises for Allies. Or is that too cynical?’ - [https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?\\_q=Tony+blair&\\_sd=1992&\\_ed=2004&\\_hb=tna](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Tony+blair&_sd=1992&_ed=2004&_hb=tna)

Although Gore won the national popular vote, ‘Bush eventually won the contested Electoral College verdict with help from the U.S. Supreme Court.’<sup>28</sup> Richard Clarke, national coordinator for counterterrorism from 1998 to 2003, stated in an interview for this study that the biggest issue about which the Clinton administration warned the incoming Bush administration was terrorism.<sup>29</sup> Clarke observed that the incoming Bush administration was concerned with two things:

One: arms control with Russia; particularly with regard to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which they wanted to get rid of [...] this was the number one issue. It seems odd but that’s what they did. And the second issue was Iraq. Where they felt that Bush’s father had not properly or sufficiently finished the Iraq War in 1990-1991 and they wanted to do something. They wanted to get rid of Saddam. And they came into office with that as a goal.<sup>30</sup>

Even before 9/11, the Bush team prioritized safeguarding American national security interests through a more robust approach to nuclear diplomacy which would take precedent over considerations about treaties, conventions, and alliances. On December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2000, William Hartung, writing in *The Columbian*, claimed that Bush was contemplating a new and dangerous unilateral approach to nuclear strategy through a new programme to make U.S. nuclear weapons more usable which the writer described as a ‘schizophrenic view of the nuclear conundrum.’<sup>31</sup> The writer then claimed that, ‘Of course, in the unfortunate event of a

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<sup>28</sup> Robert S. Erikson, ‘The 2000 Presidential Election in Historical Perspective,’ *Political Science Quarterly* 116:1 (2001), p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023; Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror* (London: Free Press, 2004), p. i. In his memoir, Clarke showed how George Tenet, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency appointed by Clinton, in his daily meetings with George W. Bush prior to 9/11 mentioned Al Qaeda on more than forty occasions.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> William D. Hartung, ‘Return to MAD-ness,’ *The Columbian* (December 25, 2000), p. 27. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/818286504/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

nuclear exchange prompted by a U.S. threat to use mininukes, the Bush doctrine would trust in our spiffy new Star Wars system to protect us.’<sup>32</sup> Such definitional attacks on the Bush team’s decisions, particularly in the realm nuclear arms control, necessitated the definition of the Bush doctrine be defended by those sympathetic to Bush’s leadership posture. This posture was defined by a conservative true believer whose ambitions were ‘fully consonant with the collective work of building a conservative regime, completing the unfinished business of the Reagan insurgency.’<sup>33</sup>

### The Bush Doctrine Before 9/11

On February 26, 2001, the conservative writer Charles Krauthammer was the first to have identified and defined a Bush doctrine during the Bush presidency. Krauthammer wrote in praising terms that the 2000s began with a ‘return to the unabashed unilateralism of the 80s’ after a speech given by the new President Bush which stated that America would build weapons to meet America’s needs and not ‘accommodate the complaints or gain the agreement of other countries... This was the genesis of the Bush Doctrine, now taking shape as the Administration takes power.’<sup>34</sup> Krauthammer, as he had done in his writing on the Reagan doctrine, defended a conservative president by defining the Bush doctrine as representing a necessary repudiation of redundant and weak approaches to America’s defense which supposedly characterized foreign policy during the 1990s.<sup>35</sup>

Krauthammer argued that, ‘The new Bush Doctrine holds that, when it comes to designing our nuclear forces, we build to start. We will build defensive missiles to suit our

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<sup>32</sup> Hartung, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Skowronek, p. 131.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Bush Doctrine,’ *CNN* (February 26, 2001) - <https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/time/2001/03/05/doctrine.html>

<sup>35</sup> Krauthammer; Charles Krauthammer, ‘Essay: The Reagan Doctrine,’ *Time* (April 1, 1985) - <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,964873,00.html>

needs. We will build offensive missiles to suit our needs.’<sup>36</sup> ‘For eight years,’ Krauthammer wrote, ‘the Clinton people held back and dumbed down defense technologies to make them A.B.M. treaty-compliant... The Bush administration will now let technologies prove (or disprove) themselves unhindered by such absurdities.’<sup>37</sup> Situated in the context of Krauthammer’s writings on the Reagan and Clinton doctrines, the latter of which he criticized as aspiring to ‘morality and universality’ whereas ‘foreign policy must be calculating and particular,’ this piece can be judged not as an example of objective journalism.<sup>38</sup> Rather, it was an attempt to confer legitimacy upon a conservative president’s bold emphasis on the necessity for America to go it alone when it needed to; an emphasis the right felt was lacking during the 1990s.

On May 1, 2001, during a speech to the National Defense University, George W. Bush warned the audience that ‘this is still a dangerous world, a less certain, a less predictable one.’<sup>39</sup> Pointing to the fact more nations had nuclear weapons and ‘still more have nuclear aspiration...the list of these countries includes some of the world’s least responsible states.’<sup>40</sup> Bush said that unlike the Cold War, threats stemmed from missiles in the hands of states for whom ‘terror and blackmail are a way of life,’ as was their hatred of the freedoms held by western societies, and that these new threats arise from states that seek weapons of mass destruction to intimidate neighbours.<sup>41</sup> Bush stressed that had Saddam Hussein possessed nuclear weapons during the Kuwait invasion, the global response would have been far more difficult. To counter these threats, Bush declared, America needed a clean break from the past and ‘new concepts of deterrence that rely on both offensive and defensive

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Clinton Doctrine,’ *Time* (April 5, 1999) - <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,990647,00.html>

<sup>39</sup> Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University. Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington D.C., May 1, 2001. *George W. Bush White House Archives* - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>

<sup>40</sup> Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

forces. Deterrence can no longer be based solely on the threat of nuclear retaliation. Defenses can strengthen by reducing incentive for proliferation.’<sup>43</sup> In hindsight, these words and ideas foreshadowed the post-9/11 doctrine which rejected containment, especially of Iraq, in favour of pre-emptive military force.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, certain moral and strategic directions inherent in the Bush’s post-9/11 foreign policy were present in Bush’s pre-9/11 foreign policy, such as defending and spreading democracy and the necessity to confront rogue states determined to threaten their regions with weapons of mass destruction, to such a degree observers suggested they already constituted Bush’s doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

Writing for California’s *The Lompoc Record* in late June 2001, Ben Wattenberg reported that ‘doctrine-maker Krauthammer is at it again, announcing the advent of “The Bush Doctrine.”’<sup>46</sup> The key word in Krauthammer’s piece, Wattenberg posited, was ‘unilateralism.’ Bush dismissed that he was, but this descriptor nevertheless caused alarm bells to ring in Europe who worried America was to go it alone and even amongst the think tank hawks who believed in sustaining American global hegemony, but did not think it was wise for Krauthammer to brandish it so brazenly in his definition of the doctrine.<sup>47</sup> By late June 2001, C.N.N. reported that 78% of people polled said they respected Bush and 70% ‘say they approve of Bush as a person – almost as high as Ronald Reagan’s numbers in early in his first term.’<sup>48</sup> In this context, Krauthammer’s definition of the Bush doctrine, and the subsequent reactions to it, were shaped by the right-wing perception (and hope) that the Bush

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Justifying his appeal to replace the A.B.M. Treaty, Bush said that America needs ‘a new framework that reflects a clear and clean break from the past, and especially from the adversarial legacy of the Cold War.’

<sup>44</sup> Melvyn Leffler, *Confronting Saddam Hussein: George W. Bush and the Invasion of Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

<sup>45</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Bush Doctrine,’ *The Washington Post* (May 3, 2001) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2001/05/04/the-bush-doctrine/429494df-7848-4e2f-a30b-2f510a159942/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ben Wattenberg, ‘Is Bush’s Unacknowledged Doctrine One of “Go it Alone?”’ *The Lompoc Record* (June 28, 2001), p. 4. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/540297463/?match=1&terms=Bush%20doctrine>

<sup>47</sup> Wattenberg, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Keating Holland, ‘Bush Job Approval Rating Bounces Back,’ *C.N.N. Inside Politics* (June 13, 2001) - <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/ALLPOLITICS/07/12/cnn.poll/index.html>

administration – only just a few months in office – intended on being more unilateral and affirmatively hegemonic than what the Clinton administration supposedly was. This is despite, as Leffler showed, not much was agreed upon during the many meetings of the National Security Council before 9/11.<sup>49</sup> In turn, the legitimacy of the administration's decisions to withdraw from the Kyoto Treaty, from the A.B.M Treaty as part of a reassertion of America's nuclear superiority in the post-Cold War world, and to engage with what America considered to be rogue states was fragile at this stage. Therefore, Krauthammer sought to rationalize these decisions through presenting them as part of a bold and repudiatory Bush doctrine that purportedly did away with relying on multilateral treaties – and approaches – that compromised America's security. How the Bush doctrine would be rhetorically wielded to sustain the legitimacy of Bush's choices after 9/11 thus had its roots in how prominent conservatives defined it before that cataclysmic event.

### **The Bush Doctrine and the Legitimation of Policy Choices: 2001 – 2005**

On September 11, 2001, terrorists led by Osama Bin Laden, who the U.S. Government later stated were operating as part of his Al Qaeda organization, attacked the twin towers in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington D.C, and killed around three thousand people.<sup>50</sup> That same evening, President Bush addressed the nation, via television, and declared that American citizens, their way of life, and their freedom came under attack 'in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts.'<sup>51</sup> Bush, in his address to the nation, stated: 'We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts, and those who harbour

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<sup>49</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, '9/11 in Retrospect: George W. Bush's Grand Strategy, Reconsidered,' *Foreign Affairs* 90:5 (2011).

<sup>50</sup> The 9/11 Commission, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Washington D.C: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> PBS NewsHour, 'WATCH: President George W. Bush's Address to the Nation After September 11, 2001 Attacks,' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA8-KEnfWbQ>

them.’<sup>52</sup> Soon after the attacks, Bush’s approval rating soared to 90%, the highest of any American president, due to what has been termed as the ‘rallying effect.’<sup>53</sup> Carrying that momentum, nine days after 9/11 on September 20, Bush further emphasized what the response would be to the attacks in a presidential address to the nation. David Frum, a speechwriter, claimed in his political biography of Bush that delivering an address to Congress on this date was the idea of Bush’s political strategist, Karl Rove, because Rove ‘knew that Bush spoke best in front of a live audience and was at his worst when he had to address the silent eye of the television camera.’<sup>54</sup> In that address, within which it was declared America’s enemies constituted an axis of evil, Bush announced that, ‘Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom.’<sup>55</sup> Bush decreed: ‘Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.’<sup>56</sup>

Skowronek posited that Bush made “pre-emption” his watchword in the War on Terror.’<sup>57</sup> ‘For Bush,’ Skowronek argued, ‘pre-emption was a way of getting out ahead of events, defining them, and orchestrating their unfolding. Pre-emption allowed Bush to stipulate the terms of the war, to redirect its action, to make it a fight of his own choosing.’<sup>58</sup> Zelikow later noted the public use of the term ‘pre-emption’ was made more out of a consideration to strengthen the administration’s case under international law and it ‘linked the quality of the Iraq proof to more general suspicions about the significance of this supposed

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> David W. Moore, ‘Bush Job Approval Reflects Record “Rally” Effect,’ *Gallup Poll News* (September 18, 2001) - <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4912/bush-job-approval-reflects-record-rally-effect.aspx>. The rally effect being that, in times of national crisis, the public rallies behind the president in support.

<sup>54</sup> David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), p. 135.

<sup>55</sup> The White House, ‘Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,’ (Washington D.C., 2001) - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>; Cali Newsome, ‘The Use of Slogans in Political Rhetoric,’ *The Corinthian* 4:3 (2002), p. 28. Referring to the usage of the ‘axis of evil’ line, White House Counsellor Karen Hughes said that it was ‘meant to be a “good quotable phrase.”’

<sup>56</sup> The White House, ‘Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.’

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

“doctrine.”<sup>59</sup> Even the phrase ‘global War on Terror’ itself was not an objective descriptor. Rather, it was a phrase strategically and consciously generated to control the administration’s narrative over events.<sup>60</sup>

In an interview for this study, then national coordinator for counterterrorism, Richard Clarke stated that, ‘When they decided to say they were going to fight a global War on Terror, I told them it was not global, it was not a war, and it wasn’t on terror. I didn’t care for that...every word in that phrase was inaccurate.’<sup>61</sup> After asking why it was inaccurate, Clark said:

It wasn’t global. There was almost nothing going on in Africa, very little at that time. There wasn’t that much going on in Asia [...] it was in the Middle East [...] and was it a war? No. It was a counter-terror operation. It involved special forces, but it wasn’t a war. There weren’t tanks [...] and it wasn’t on terrorism, it was on Al Qaeda. And Al Qaeda related groups. We didn’t decide to go after the F.A.R.C. in Columbia. There was a whole list of terror groups that we didn’t bother with. So, it wasn’t a global War on Terror.<sup>62</sup>

This was reinforced by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in 2011 who admitted that the label was a mistake because it was, to him, not so much a war as it was a competition of ideas

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<sup>59</sup> Philip Zelikow, ‘Chapter 6: U.S. Strategic Planning in 2001-02,’ in Melvyn P. Leffler & Jeffrey W. Legro, *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 114; John Prados & Christopher Ames, ‘The Iraq War – Part II: Was There Even a Decision? U.S. and British Documents Give No Indication Alternatives Were Seriously Considered,’ *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328* (Posted October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010) - <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/index.htm>

<sup>60</sup> Walter Russell Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America’s Grand Strategy in a World at Risk* (New York: Knopf, 2004), p. 111.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Richard Clarke, March 2, 2023.

with radical Islamists.<sup>63</sup> This relays the fact that the semantics at play over whether it was a war, or whether there was a doctrine, ignores why such terms were utilized in the first place.<sup>64</sup> Analyzing the Bush administration's official endorsement of a doctrine sheds light on the power of this concept, during the Bush presidency, as a tool to control the definition of its actions and thereby in facilitating their legitimation.

### The Bush Doctrine's Rhetorical Role in Launching the War on Terror

On September 18, 2001, Bush was given approval by Congress to 'use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001,' as per the Authorization to Use Military Force (A.U.M.F.) legislation.<sup>65</sup> On October 7, 2001, Bush addressed the nation announcing his order that America had begun strikes against Al Qaeda training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.<sup>66</sup> In this address, Bush stated that, 'Given the nature and reach of our enemies, we will win this conflict by the patient accumulation of successes, by meeting a series of challenges with determination and will and purpose. Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is

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<sup>63</sup> 'CNN Official Interview: Donald Rumsfeld: War on Terror Label a Mistake,' March 9, 2011 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVK-Qj6FWd8>

<sup>64</sup> Warren Vieth & Josh Meyer, 'Bush Likens War on Terror to Cold War,' *The Los Angeles Times* (October 7, 2005), p. 100. -

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/192600002/?match=1&terms=Bush%20likens%20war%20on%20terror%20to%20cold%20war>

<sup>65</sup> Public Law. No. 107-40, 115 Stat. 224 (2001), The Authorization to Use Military Force -

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/23#:~:text=Authorization%20for%20Use%20of%20Military%20Force%20%2D%20Authorizes%20the%20President%20to,such%20organizations%20or%20persons%2C%20in>; Public Law. No. 107-243, 116 Stat. 1498 (2002), Authorization For Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002. - [https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-joint-resolution/114#:~:text=%2F11%2F2002\)-,Authorization%20for%20Use%20of%20Military%20Force%20Against%20Iraq%20Resolution%20of,by%20the%20Security%20Council%20to](https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-joint-resolution/114#:~:text=%2F11%2F2002)-,Authorization%20for%20Use%20of%20Military%20Force%20Against%20Iraq%20Resolution%20of,by%20the%20Security%20Council%20to)

<sup>66</sup> AP Archive, 'Bush Address on Military Action in Afghanistan,' October 7, 2001 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osXkym5GHXI>

broaden.’<sup>67</sup> ‘If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocence,’ Bush said, ‘they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril...The name of today’s military operation is “enduring freedom.”’<sup>68</sup>

During press conferences, throughout late 2001, Bush frequently reaffirmed his dedication to ‘enforce the doctrine.’<sup>69</sup> On October 30, 2001, Bush gave a speech in Maryland during which he spoke about the importance of the War on Terror as it was now being executed in Afghanistan, as well as the home front.<sup>70</sup> Bush reinforced the message that the best way to defend the homeland was to find the terrorists where they were hidden and that ‘the doctrine I laid out to the United States Congress is a doctrine this Nation will enforce. It says clearly that if you harbour a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you provide sanctuary to a terrorist, if you fund a terrorist, you are just as guilty.’<sup>71</sup> Here, Bush emphasized the repudiatory thrust of his doctrine which was sweeping in terms of who America could now deem as a legitimate target and how it could do so; that being at the discretion of the American president. In mid-October 2001, Karen DeYoung of *The Washington Post* observed that, ‘The use of the word “doctrine” is intentional. It is meant to describe a new paradigm in U.S. foreign policy, a guiding principle through which other issues will be viewed and acted upon throughout the Bush presidency.’<sup>72</sup> DeYoung noticed that the Bush administration’s specific invocation of the term ‘doctrine’ in its rhetoric constituted part of its attempt to forge a rationalizing narrative about its response to the 9/11 attacks. And, by

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<sup>67</sup> AP Archive, ‘Bush Address on Military Action in Afghanistan.’

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Remarks Prior to Discussions With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters, September 28, 2001,’ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2001 Book II July 1 – December 1*, pp. 1174-1175; ‘Remarks to the Community at Travis Air Force Base, California, October 17, 2001,’ p. 1257.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Remarks Announcing The Lessons of Liberty Initiative in Rockville, Maryland, October 30, 2001,’ in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2001 Book II July 1 – December 31*, p. 1326.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Remarks Announcing The Lessons of Liberty Initiative in Rockville, Maryland, October 30, 2001,’ p. 1326.

<sup>72</sup> Karen DeYoung, ‘Allies Are Cautious On “Bush Doctrine,”’ *The Washington Post* (October 15, 2001) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/10/16/allies-are-cautious-on-bush-doctrine/9719022e-d6c4-4942-b9d0-735ba80a42f9/>

implication, discredit approaches employed by previous administrations which mainly emphasized deterrence and law enforcement rather than pre-emption to deal with terrorism and its sponsors.<sup>73</sup>

The War on Terror was thus launched through a sweeping expansion of executive power to legitimize new interpretations of constitutional authority, as it related to making war and dealing with suspected terrorists – including prisoners of war.<sup>74</sup> The most infamous documents, in this regard, were the so-called ‘torture memos,’ or the Memorandum Regarding Military Interrogation of Alien Unlawful Combatants Held Outside the United States, which were drafted by Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo. These memos advised varying techniques of torture to the president, director of Central Intelligence, and the Department of Defense.<sup>75</sup> Such techniques included waterboarding, physical torment, and sleep deprivation and were deemed as potentially legally permissible because the authors found that in the war against Al Qaeda, ‘prosecution under Section 2340A may be barred because enforcement of the statute would represent an unconstitutional infringement of the President’s authority to conduct war.’<sup>76</sup> This new legal framework being advised was referred to as the new paradigm since these legal interpretations rested on a reading of the

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<sup>73</sup> The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age* (Washington D.C., 2000), p. 23. - <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2000.pdf>. The Clinton administration’s final National Security Strategy document read that, ‘We must continue to improve our program to combat terrorism in the areas of antiterrorism, counterterrorism, consequence management, and intelligence support to deter terrorism.’

<sup>74</sup> Jack Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgement Inside the Bush Administration* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), p. 142.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel, Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales Counsel to the President. Re. Standards of Conduct for Interrogation under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2340-2340A. August 1, 2002. *National Security Digital Archive* - <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/02.08.01.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel, Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales Counsel to the President. Re. Standards of Conduct for Interrogation under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2340-2340A. August 1, 2002; John Yoo, *Crisis and Command: A History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New Jersey: Kaplan Trade, 2011). Yoo, as a lawyer and a scholar, has wrote numerous works regarding his expansive views of presidential power and has argued that Bush’s sweeping employment of power was not an aberration from previous presidents. Yoo refers to Abraham Lincoln’s suspension of *habeus corpus* during the Civil War and Franklin Roosevelt’s decision to intern Japanese-Americans during the Second World War through presidential directive.

Constitution which stated that the president, as Commander-in-Chief, 'has the authority to disregard virtually all previously known legal boundaries, if national security demands it.'<sup>77</sup>

In a memorandum dated May 15, 2002, addressed to Vice President Dick Cheney, pertaining to the imperative of prolonging the detention of an individual labelled an enemy combatant (an additional legal concept introduced by the Bush administration to rationalize the application of coercive measures), Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld articulated the following rationale:

Release after dismissal of U.S. District Court charges would foster the notably undesirable view that the global war on terrorism is merely a law enforcement action, contrary to the Bush doctrine. While law enforcement aspects are important, we are at war.<sup>78</sup>

This memo illustrates how the administration was concerned about their own actions potentially repudiating the Bush doctrine as they had been publicly defining it – themselves – to repudiate previous counterterror frameworks; such as mainly using law enforcement to tackle the issue.<sup>79</sup> This would become an acute problem during the second term as

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<sup>77</sup> Jane Mayer, 'The Hidden Power: The Legal Mind Behind the White House's War on Terror,' *The New Yorker* (June 25, 2006) - <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/07/03/the-hidden-power>; Public Law 107-56-OCT. 26, 2001. Uniting and Strengthening America By Providing Appropriate Tools Required To Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) Act of 2001. - <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ56/PLAW-107publ56.htm>. Another infamous piece of War on Terror legislation, passed just one month after the attacks of September 11, 2001, was the USA PATRIOT Act. This act authorised measures to enhance the ability of the state to prevent terrorism through expanding the power of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, authorizing enhanced detention and surveillance powers, and detailing an expansive list of activities which could potentially qualify for terrorism charges.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum For the Vice President. Subject: Potential DoD Detention of John Walker Lindh. May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002. *Donald Rumsfeld Papers Archives*, pp. 1-2 - <http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/2526/2002-05-15%20to%20The%20Vice%20President%20re%20Potential%20DoD%20Detention%20of%20John%20Walker%20Lindh%20with%20Attachments.pdf#search=%22Bush%20doctrine%22>

<sup>79</sup> Bruce Hoffman, 'Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11,' *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35:2 (2002), 303-316 (p. 306). Hoffman posited that before 9/11, the U.S. lacked the political will to sustain a long and determined counterterrorism campaign. The record 'of inchoate, un-sustained previous efforts effectively retarded significant progress against the menace.'

inconsistencies in the doctrine's execution became clearer with the passage of time.

Nevertheless, at this early stage of the War on Terror, the administration clearly sought to assert control over the Bush doctrine's definition and not allow its meaning and purpose to be second-guessed by their actions being deemed inconsistent with the definition they provided.

The formal articulation of the doctrine 'was encompassed in the 2002 release of the *National Security Strategy*.'<sup>80</sup> The four key themes of this document, published in September 2002, were its calls for American pre-emptive military action against hostile states and terrorist groups which sought to develop weapons of mass destruction; secondly, its announcement that America would not allow its global military strength to be challenged; thirdly, its commitment that America would cooperatively engage in international multilateralism but would not hesitate to act alone if necessary; fourthly, it proclaimed the goal of spreading democracy around the world and especially in the Muslim world.<sup>81</sup> The document's co-author, Philip Zelikow, posited that the document was interesting historically 'as a snapshot of some of the worldviews and axiomatic beliefs then prevalent among several senior U.S. officials, including the president.'<sup>82</sup> Zelikow corresponded to the author suggesting that

What Condi (and Bush) might say is that they had a "freedom agenda" that stressed better governance as a long-term way to address the conditions that created violent Islamist extremist groups. Their argument was that mere police control, just for the sake of "stability," was short-sighted and counterproductive. They also thought it was

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<sup>80</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. 165; The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington D.C., September 2002) - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>

<sup>81</sup> Keir A. Lieber & Robert J. Lieber, 'The Bush National Security Strategy,' *Commentary* 7:4 (December 2002), p. 34. - [https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa\\_dec02\\_lieber.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/fpa/fpa_dec02_lieber.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Zelikow, p. 116.

patronizing, even racist, to assume that Muslim societies could not handle human dignity or freedom. (This is not the same thing as “democracy.”)<sup>83</sup>

However, the 2002 document was not ‘a powerful or revealing guide to concrete policy choices. That is especially true for the long-simmering Iraq war that reignited in 2003.’<sup>84</sup> Therefore, though the *National Security Strategy* document – the publication of which is requested by Congress – formally articulated certain ideas the Bush team had about the world in the post-9/11 era, as well as some of the content of the Bush doctrine as they wished to present it, its influence in policymaking is contested.<sup>85</sup>

In his June 2002 speech at West Point, Bush stated that while Cold War strategies of deterrence and containment were once central to American defense, new threats demand new approaches. He argued that deterrence is ineffective against terrorist networks without a state to protect, and containment is insufficient against unstable dictators armed with weapons of mass destruction. In this new era, Bush asserted, American security depends on taking decisive action.<sup>86</sup> Bush emphasized how this new era, spawned by 9/11, required American foreign policy to go on the offensive against regimes and groups who threaten it and its allies since history ‘will look back and determine the mettle and drive and desire of all of us who have been given awesome responsibilities.’<sup>87</sup> Therefore, Bush continued to remind his audiences, ‘I laid out a new doctrine called pre-emption’ to go into Afghanistan and remove the Taliban from power – as well as any other regime that could perceivably threaten the United States.<sup>88</sup> Defending the administration’s war against terrorism and its frequent charges

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<sup>83</sup> Written response from Philip Zelikow, February 9, 2023.

<sup>84</sup> Zelikow, p. 116.

<sup>85</sup> Lieber & Lieber, p. 34; Warren & Siracusa, p. 165; Zelikow, p. 116.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, June 1, 2002,’ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2002 Book I January 1- June 30, 2002*, p. 919.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Remarks at a Reception for Governor Rick Perry of Texas in Houston, June 14, 2002,’ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2002 Book I January 1- June 30, 2002*, p. 994.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Remarks at a Reception for Governor Rick Perry of Texas in Houston, June 14, 2002,’ p. 994.

throughout 2002 that Saddam Hussein in Iraq posed a threat to the world, during a July press conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Bush proclaimed to one of the reporters present that,

Under the Bush doctrine, I said we'd use all resources, all available resources, to fight off terror. And that includes working with friends and allies to cut off money, to use diplomatic pressure, to convince – to convince those that think they can traffic in terror that they're going to face a mighty coalition.<sup>89</sup>

Nearly a month later, on August 26, 2002, Cheney gave a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103<sup>rd</sup> National Convention and further clarified that, 'Under the Bush doctrine, a regime that harbours or supports terrorists will be regarded as hostile to the United States.'<sup>90</sup>

Documents released by the National Security Archive show that Blair and the Bush administration collaborated closely to produce a 'far starker picture of the threat from Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction than was justified by the intelligence at the time.'<sup>91</sup> These rhetorical invocations of the Bush doctrine at this moment in time, by the president and vice president, can be seen as clear examples of the administration's attempt to pre-empt its own preferable understanding about the choices it was set on making – particularly pertaining to Iraq. The administration's insistence that there was in operation a Bush doctrine defined by making no distinction between terrorists and their harbourers, despite the discrepancies in how America, after the Iraq invasion, was engaging with other

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<sup>89</sup> 38 WCPD 1095 Remarks Prior to Discussions with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange with Reporters in Kananaskis, *Compilation of Presidential Documents Volume 38, Issue 26* (July 1, 2002), p. 1098.

<sup>90</sup> The White House, 'Vice President Speaks at VFW 103rd National Convention,' August 26, 2002 - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>

<sup>91</sup> John Prados & Christopher Ames, 'The Iraq War – Part III: Shaping the Debate. U.S. and British Documents Show Transatlantic Propaganda Cooperation,' *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 330* (Posted October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010) - <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB330/index.htm#a>

designated rogue states and leaders, reflected Bush's 'appeal to definition' which 'countered party disaffection with his father's administration' and 'offered relief from Clinton's moral confusion, feckless character, and official disgrace.'<sup>92</sup>

A few months before Bush and Cheney gave these remarks, the political director at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Peter Ricketts, wrote a letter in March 2002 to Foreign Secretary Jack Straw with advice for Blair for the latter's upcoming Crawford summit with Bush.<sup>93</sup> In that letter, Ricketts wrote that with Blair 'sharing Bush's broad objective,' that being taking out Saddam, the former could 'help shape how it is defined, and the approach to achieving it.'<sup>94</sup> Ricketts also wrote that the Americans were 'scrambling to establish a link' between Iraq and Al Qaeda which had been 'frankly unconvincing,' and that 'we are still left with a problem of bringing public opinion to accept the imminence of a threat from Iraq. This is something the Prime Minister and President need to have a frank discussion about.'<sup>95</sup> To bring public opinion on board with the administration's intentions, the press played an important role in beating the war drum.<sup>96</sup>

### The Media and the Bush Doctrine

Carroll Doherty and Jocelyn Kiley argue that the bleak retrospective judgement of the Iraq war obscure 'the breadth of public support for U.S. military action at the start of the conflict

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<sup>92</sup> Skowronek, p. 131.

<sup>93</sup> Document 2: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, letter from Peter Ricketts, Political Director, to Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, March 22, 2002, SOURCE: The Downing Street Documents, *The National Security Archive* - <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB330/III-Doc02.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> Document 2: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, letter from Peter Ricketts, Political Director, to Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2; Jim Pickard, Anna Gross & Rafe Uddin, 'Tony Blair Tried to Change BBC Tone on Iraq on Eve of 2003 Invasion,' *Financial Times* (December 29, 2023) - <https://www.ft.com/content/c8cbbb7d-ec12-4abd-8d74-769129e2a173>

<sup>96</sup> Tom Basile, *Tough Sell: Fighting the Media War in Iraq* (Washington D.C: Potomac Books, 2017).

and, perhaps more importantly, in the months leading up to it.’<sup>97</sup> Throughout 2002 and early 2003, the administration ‘marshalled wide backing for the use of military force in Iraq among both the public and Congress.’<sup>98</sup> In April 2002, the British journalist Trevor McDonald asked Bush whether he had made up his mind that Iraq must be attacked to which Bush responded saying that, ‘I made up my mind that Saddam needs to go.’<sup>99</sup> In turn, McDonald responded saying that, ‘And you would take action to make sure that happens? And of course, if the logic of the War on Terror means anything – which you have explained – then Saddam must go?’<sup>100</sup> Bush responded: ‘That’s what I just said. The policy of my government is that he goes.’<sup>101</sup>

Pew Research Center found that in early 2002, 73% of Americans favoured using force in Iraq to overthrow Saddam which ‘represents a strong endorsement of the prospective use of force compared with other military missions in the post-Cold War era.’<sup>102</sup> The administration disseminated information directly and by implication.<sup>103</sup> However, the press transmitted that information which influenced public support for the war, especially regarding the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction, that there was a link between Saddam and Al Qaeda, and that world public opinion was in favour of America going to war.<sup>104</sup> Administration officials were the most frequently quoted sources, the voices of anti-

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<sup>97</sup> Carroll Doherty and Jocelyn Kiley, ‘A Look Back at How Fear and False Beliefs Bolstered U.S. Public Support for War in Iraq,’ *Pew Research Center* (March 14, 2023) - <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/03/14/a-look-back-at-how-fear-and-false-beliefs-bolstered-u-s-public-support-for-war-in-iraq/>

<sup>98</sup> Doherty & Kiley.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Interview with the United Kingdom’s ITV Television Network, April 4, 2002,’ in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush 2002 Book 1 – January 1 to June 30, 2002*, pp. 555-556

<sup>100</sup> ‘Interview with the United Kingdom’s ITV Television Network, April 4, 2002,’ pp. 555-556.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 555-556.

<sup>102</sup> Pew Research Center, ‘Report: Americans Favour Force in Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and...’ (January 22, 2002) - <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2002/01/22/americans-favor-force-in-iraq-somalia-sudan-and/>

<sup>103</sup> Loren Thompson, ‘The Bush Doctrine,’ *The Wall Street Journal* (June 13, 2002) - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1023932614767340560>. This columnist wrote that the ‘Bush Doctrine will require the will to act...It means investing time in explaining to the Congress and the public why first strikes will be required, so that when the time comes to act popular sentiment does not get in the way of military necessity.’

<sup>104</sup> Steven Kull et al., ‘Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War,’ *Political Science Quarterly* 118:4 (2004), 569-598.

war groups and opposition Democrats were barely audible, and ‘the overall thrust of coverage favoured a pro-war perspective.’<sup>105</sup>

During a British cabinet meeting in September 2002, Blair said that the dossier on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction showed that containment had worked up to a point, but that Saddam ‘continued to rebuild his programme to acquire such weapons.’<sup>106</sup> By the end of July 2002, the chief of British foreign intelligence indicated that that military action was now seen as inevitable and to be justified ‘by conjunction of terrorism and W.M.D.,’ and that ‘the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.’<sup>107</sup> These decisions were made by a few at the height of the administration and even some influential people were not forthrightly told what the president, and his closest advisers, had in mind. Zelikow responded to the author that, ‘Those Iraq decisions were surprising to me at the time, when I learned of them in the summer of 2002, because all my focus after 9/11 had been on the struggle against the violent Islamist extremist groups (and the effort in Afghanistan/Pakistan).’<sup>108</sup>

The story of Bush’s decisions leading up to the Iraq war, then, was a ‘chronical of continual dilemmas since the president was pursuing two simultaneous policies. He was planning for war, and he was conducting diplomacy aiming to avoid war. At times, the war planning aided the diplomacy; at many other points it contradicted it.’<sup>109</sup> Often at the annoyance of certain political commentators sympathetic to using force against Saddam and

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<sup>105</sup> Danny Hayes & Matt Guardino, ‘Whose Views Made the News? Media Coverage and the March to War in Iraq,’ *Political Communication* 27:59 (2010), 59-87 (p. 59).

<sup>106</sup> CAB 128/128. Cabinet: Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street on Monday 23 September 2002 at 5:00pm. The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive Website, pp. 1-2. -

[https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?\\_q=Tony+blair&\\_sd=1992&\\_ed=2004&\\_hb=tna](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Tony+blair&_sd=1992&_ed=2004&_hb=tna)

<sup>107</sup> Document 14: United Kingdom, Matthew Rycroft, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Cabinet Minutes of Discussion, S 195/02, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002, *The National Security Archive* -

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/II-Doc14.pdf>; CAB 128/128. Cabinet: Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street on Monday 23 September 2002 at 5:00pm. The National Archives, Tony Blair Archive Website, p. 3. At the meeting, public opinion was considered, and concerns were raised about the U.K. having a key ‘role to play in overcoming a tendency in the United States towards unilateralism and that in Europe towards anti-Americanism.’ -

[https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?\\_q=Tony+blair&\\_sd=1992&\\_ed=2004&\\_hb=tna](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=Tony+blair&_sd=1992&_ed=2004&_hb=tna)

<sup>108</sup> Written response from Philip Zelikow, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. ‘Condi’ refers to Condoleezza Rice.

<sup>109</sup> Leffler, p. 4.

who were vigorous defenders of the Bush doctrine in the media.<sup>110</sup> For example, Karl Rove had ‘regular lunches with William Kristol, editor of the conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard*, the *Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer, and several others from that crowd. Their message to Bush: Stop being a weenie and go do it.’<sup>111</sup> Whereas such voices were more explicit in their desire to send American troops into Iraq to liquidate the Saddam threat, the major outlets were subtler in how they reported on that threat.

Moreover, in late August/early September 2002, *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller, with the blessing of National Security Adviser Rice, met with White House nuclear proliferation expert Robert Joseph who briefed Miller on Iraq’s purchase of ‘tens of thousands of high-strength aluminium tubes that C.I.A. officials believed were intended as components of centrifuges to enrich uranium.’<sup>112</sup> Miller then ran the story ‘just in time for Vice President Cheney’s appearance on NBC’s *Meet the Press* [and] Rice’s on CNN’s *Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer*.’<sup>113</sup> During these appearances, Cheney and Rice both repeated the story recently published in *The New York Times* as further evidence of the Saddam threat.<sup>114</sup> The media, in turn, does not tell people what to think, it rather tells them what to think about.<sup>115</sup> On November 7, 2002, P.B.S. held a live debate on the administration’s foreign

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<sup>110</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘Palin Isn’t Only One Wrong About Doctrine,’ *Statesman Journal* (September 16, 2008), p. 21. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/202718692/?terms=Obama%20bush%20doctrine&match=1>. In September 2008, the well-known propagator of doctrines, Charles Krauthammer, said that ‘presidential doctrines are inherently malleable and difficult to define...I know something about the subject because, as the Wikipedia entry on the Bush doctrine notes,’ Krauthammer wrote, ‘I was the first to use the term.’; Lawrence F. Kaplan & William Kristol, *The War Over Iraq: Saddam’s Tyranny and America’s Mission* (New York: Encounter Books, 2003).

<sup>111</sup> Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Pocket Books, 2004), pp. 333-334.

<sup>112</sup> Lloyd Grove, ‘Former NYT Reporter Judith Miller Pleads Her Shaky Case,’ *The Daily Beast* (April 14, 2015) - <https://www.thedailybeast.com/former-nyt-reporter-judith-miller-pleads-her-shaky-case>; Judith Miller, ‘The Iraq War and Stubborn Myths,’ *The Wall Street Journal* (April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015) - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-iraq-war-and-stubborn-myths-1428087215>. Miller quipped: ‘I took America to war in Iraq. It was all me.’

<sup>113</sup> Grove, ‘Former NYT Reporter Judith Miller Pleads Her Shaky Case.’

<sup>114</sup> Transcript of Interview with Vice-President Dick Cheney on *Meet the Press*, 8 September 2002 with *NBC News*. Moderator: Tim Russert - [https://www.leadingtowar.com/PDFsources\\_claims\\_aluminum/2002\\_09\\_08\\_NBC.pdf](https://www.leadingtowar.com/PDFsources_claims_aluminum/2002_09_08_NBC.pdf); Interview with Condoleezza Rice on *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer*, September 8, 2002 - <https://transcripts.cnn.com/show/le/date/2002-09-08/segment/00>

<sup>115</sup> Bernard Cohen, *Press and Foreign Policy* (California: Princeton University Press, 1963); Douglas Kellner, ‘Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the “War on Terror,”’ *Presidential Studies*

policy because ‘this Bush Doctrine is what people are talking about.’<sup>116</sup> Why were they talking about it? Primarily because, as journalist James Rosen stated to Bush: ‘the clearest and strongest message you have ever sent from any podium has been what you like to call the Bush doctrine.’<sup>117</sup> Consequently, Rosen asked the president what was preventing him from using military force against other leaders who would fall under Bush’s definition of what a terrorist is, such as Yasser Arafat.<sup>118</sup> Bush responded saying that, ‘Well, not every action requires military action, Jim...As a matter of fact, military action is the very last resort for us.’<sup>119</sup>

In January 2003, when questioned on North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons, Ron Fournier of the *Associated Press* claimed Bush was ‘rewarding North Korea for bad behaviour, something you promised never to do.’<sup>120</sup> Bush responded saying that he wanted a peaceful diplomatic solution.<sup>121</sup> In this regard, in April 2003, one month after the invasion of Iraq, Bush was interviewed by N.B.C.’s Tom Brokaw during which the latter asked the president whether, after the successful toppling of Saddam Hussein, Bush had thought about a comprehensive structure for dealing with weapons of mass destruction and the need for pre-emptive strikes against other rogue nations; such as Libya and Iran. Bush asserted that, ‘Well, the Bush doctrine is actually being defined by action, as opposed to by words. Although, I think if you compile a lot of the speeches I’ve given you, you could come

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*Quarterly* 37:4 (2007), 622-645. Kellner argued that the Bush administration, ‘aided and abetted by the U.S. corporate media, manipulated a politics of fear to push through a right-wing agenda that included the Patriot Act, massive changes in the legal system, a dramatic expansion of the U.S. military, and U.S.-led military intervention’ in Afghanistan and Iraq.

<sup>116</sup> PBS Think Tank with Ben Wattenberg, ‘The Bush Doctrine.’ – Originally Aired 7/11/2002 - [https://www.pbs.org/thinktank/show\\_1000.html](https://www.pbs.org/thinktank/show_1000.html)

<sup>117</sup> ‘The President’s News Conference, October 28, 2003,’ in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2003 Book II July 1 – December 31*, p. 1401.

<sup>118</sup> ‘The President’s News Conference, October 28, 2003,’ p. 1401.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1401.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Remarks Prior to Discussions with President Kwasniewski of Poland and an Exchange with Reporters,’ January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2003 Book I – January 1 to June 30, 2003*, p. 49.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Remarks Prior to Discussions with President Kwasniewski of Poland and an Exchange with Reporters,’ p. 49.

up with the Bush doctrine.’<sup>122</sup> In this instance, Bush seemed hesitant to assertively associate his emphasis on diplomacy when dealing with other potential threats in the War on Terror.

A few weeks later, Cheney delivered remarks to the graduates at West Point in which he proclaimed that,

After 9/11, President Bush decided that the distinction between the terrorists and their sponsors should no longer stand. The Bush Doctrine asserts that states supporting terrorists, or providing sanctuary for terrorists, will be deemed just as guilty of crimes as the terrorists themselves...If there is anyone in the world today who doubts the seriousness of the Bush Doctrine, I would urge that person to consider the fate of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq.<sup>123</sup>

In this context, what the aforementioned exchanges between Bush and the media reflect is the general susceptibility of doctrines, if officially endorsed and defined, to become scrutinized by the media for inconsistency in action. The decision to engage in peaceful diplomacy with nations and leaders, such as North Korea and Arafat, received more scrutiny than the decision to invade Iraq.<sup>124</sup> Thus, not only does this shed light on the trend that the media have a long history of supporting the efforts of government during wartime, but they are also willing participants in propagating the narratives – however fabricated – legitimising war; some of the most famous examples being the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, the supposed killing of

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<sup>122</sup> ‘Interview With Tom Brokaw of NBC News, April 24, 2003,’ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2003 Book 1 – January 1 to June 30, 2003*, p. 378.

<sup>123</sup> The White House, ‘Vice President’s Remarks at the U.S. Military Academy Commencement,’ May 31, 2003 - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030531-7.html>

<sup>124</sup> Deepa Kumar, ‘Media, War, and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War,’ *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3:1 (2006), p. 48.

Kuwaiti babies in incubators during the 1991 Gulf War, and Saddam's non-existent weapons of mass destruction.<sup>125</sup>

### The Bush Doctrine's Essence and the Iraq Decision

Studies on Bush's psychology and personality traits suggest that Bush lacked integrative complexity, thereby he viewed issues without nuance.<sup>126</sup> Immelman et al. judged Bush's personality using the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria and identified the president as fitting the outgoing, dominant (controlling), and dauntless personality patterns, which together constitute a style given to lack of reflection, superficiality, and impulsivity.<sup>127</sup> In this light, Untermeyer told the author in an interview for this study that Bush had certain 'native instincts about how the United States should act when grievously wounded as it was in those attacks. And he acted accordingly and that was with the full blessing and coordination of his foreign policy team.'<sup>128</sup> Cheney later wrote that immediately after 9/11, during the National Security Council meeting that the president convened, 'the contours of the Bush Doctrine began to emerge. We would go after the terrorists who had done us harm – and we would go after those who made their murderous attacks possible.'<sup>129</sup> Although such testimonies suggest the Bush doctrine naturally developed immediately after 9/11 out of Bush's instinctiveness, certain remarks given by officials post-presidency reveal that there was far more complexity to the decision-making process, and ideological depth to what has since become known as the Bush doctrine, than the president's rhetoric often implied.

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<sup>125</sup> Kumar, pp. 49-51.

<sup>126</sup> Felix J. Thoemmes, 'Integrative Complexity of 41 U.S. Presidents,' *Political Psychology* 28:2 (2007), 193-226.

<sup>127</sup> Robert Maranto et al., *Judging Bush*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Chase Untermeyer, February 1, 2024.

<sup>129</sup> Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), p. 9.

During an interview with the Hoover Institution of Stanford University in 2012 Condoleezza Rice said, ‘I don’t think President Bush much liked the notion of doctrines.’<sup>130</sup> Three years prior, during an interview with National Public Radio, Bush’s Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz spoke on how the internal affairs of other countries was in America’s interests and that ‘you tailor what you can do according to the circumstances.’<sup>131</sup> In turn, the interviewer asked whether you tailor what you can do because ‘you can’t apply it consistently’ to which Wolfowitz responded saying that, ‘Look, I think the notion that there’s a dogma or doctrine of foreign policy that gives you a textbook recipe for how to react to all situations is really nonsense.’<sup>132</sup> How do we interpret such remarks from two influential figures in the Bush administration, given Bush’s frequent rhetorical appeals to his doctrine as we have seen earlier?

Firstly, the Bush doctrine per se served more as a rhetorical device than as a proscriptive guide for policymaking.<sup>133</sup> Though the doctrine was invoked publicly to justify specific actions – most famously, the invasion of Iraq under the premise of pre-emptive self-defense – the actual decision-making process was far more nuanced, fraught with competing interests, constraints, and shifting assessments of geopolitical realities; the rifts that began to emerge in 2003/2004 pitted Rice and Wolfowitz on each other’s opposite sides.<sup>134</sup> In practice, policymakers had to navigate a tangle of contingencies, often deviating from the doctrine

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<sup>130</sup> Hoover Institution, ‘Interview with Condoleezza Rice,’ *Hoover Institution* (2012) - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzu\\_QZaUbPQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzu_QZaUbPQ). 21:58.

<sup>131</sup> NPR, ‘Interview: Wolfowitz on U.S. Role in Other Nations’ Affairs,’ *All Things Considered*, September 5, 2009. - <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112591394>

<sup>132</sup> NPR, ‘Interview: Wolfowitz on U.S. Role in Other Nations’ Affairs.’

<sup>133</sup> Walter LaFaber, ‘The Bush Doctrine,’ *Diplomatic History* 26:4 (2002), 543-558. LaFaber posited that the Bush doctrine was used to ‘pre-empt’ domestic debate.

<sup>134</sup> Peter Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (New York: Anchor Books, 2013), p. 229. By the time the 2002 midterms passed, Baker argued, ‘there were in fact Bush people and Cheney people. In both national security and the economic teams, fissures had opened that reflected profound differences in policy and personality. Bush and Cheney themselves remained close, and the president still relied heavily on his number two. But the president allowed a fractious struggle to play out beneath him without resolving it firmly one way or the other. Most significantly, Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were increasingly fighting with Colin Powell, sometimes joined by Condoleezza Rice.’

when strategic or political conditions demanded it. This discrepancy between rhetoric and practice demonstrates that the doctrine's simplicity was, in many ways, politically expedient rather than intellectually rigid. In this way, while 9/11 prompted assertive responses which was witnessable in Bush's (and Cheney's) rhetoric, which was itself shaped in part by Bush's instinctive approach to leadership as well as his Reagan-like ideological commitment to such American values as freedom and democracy, the specific contours and ideological depth embedded in the Bush doctrine were not formed in a vacuum.<sup>135</sup>

Philip Zelikow, co-author of the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, corresponded to the author in a written response for this study that,

No one then referred to a "Bush Doctrine." I did not think there was one, though I've seen the various arguments. There were certain distinctive ideas, of which the most important was the belief he, Condi, (and I) shared, that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the lines between 'foreign' and 'domestic' policy had blurred as the principal issues had become more transnational. Thus, for example, state failure and its consequences were both domestic and transnational.<sup>136</sup>

Rather than a doctrine to respond to these new threats and circumstances, Zelikow argued that the new agenda that emerged in the winter of 2001 and early 2002 can be broken down

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<sup>135</sup> For scholarship on the Bush doctrine, see: P. Dombrowski & Rodger Payne, 'Global Debate and the Limits of the Bush Doctrine,' *International Studies Perspective* 4:4 (2003), 395-408; Robert Jervis, 'Understanding the Bush Doctrine,' *Political Science Quarterly* 118:3 (2003), 365-388; LaFaber, 'The Bush Doctrine,'; Stanley Renshon & Peter Suedfeld, *Understanding the Bush Doctrine: Psychology and Strategy in the Age of Terrorism* (New York, 2007); Brian Schmidt & Michael Williams, 'The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realists,' *Security Studies* 17:2 (2008), 191-220; John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Chicago, 2018), p. 187. Dennis Merrill, 'The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (2006), 27-37 (p. 27). Merrill suggested that, 'The historic distance between the Truman Doctrine and the Bush Doctrine is really not that great.'

<sup>136</sup> Written response from Philip Zelikow, February 9, 2023. 'He' refers to Bush and 'Condi' refers to Condoleezza Rice.

‘into four major “lines of action” – a phrase then much in use.’<sup>137</sup> Firstly, an intensification of counterterror work; secondly, an agenda for homeland security such as restructuring the U.S. Government and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security; thirdly, an agenda to fight global poverty and disease since Bush saw the War on Terror in civilizational terms and wanted to defend societies against corrosive, violent despair; ‘the fourth major line of action in the emerging agenda was Iraq’ under the framework of pre-emption.<sup>138</sup> Pursuing these four varying lines of action, and the differences of opinion in how to achieve the ends towards which such lines of action were directed, contributed to such dismissals that the administration was doctrinal and rigid in its decision-making approach.<sup>139</sup> Pre-emptively invading Iraq was a decision spawned out of a controversial, complex, and often complicated policymaking process.<sup>140</sup> The key drivers of that process on the ground were the more hawkish elements inside the administration, now commonly referred to as the neoconservatives.<sup>141</sup>

Brian Schmidt and Michael Williams argue that neoconservatism ‘provided the theoretical and policy content of the Bush Doctrine.’<sup>142</sup> John Mearsheimer wrote that, ‘Neoconservative theory – the Bush doctrine – is essentially Wilsonianism with teeth. The theory has an idealist strand and a power strand: Wilsonianism provides the idealism, an emphasis on military power provides the teeth.’<sup>143</sup> Neoconservatism ‘is a political ideology

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<sup>137</sup> Philip Zelikow, ‘Chapter 6: U.S. Strategic Planning in 2001-02,’ in Melvyn P. Leffler & Jeffrey W. Legro, *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 107.

<sup>138</sup> Zelikow, pp. 107-110.

<sup>139</sup> Baker, pp. 261-266.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Bill Kristol, January 16, 2023.

<sup>141</sup> Francis Fukuyama, ‘The Neoconservative Moment,’ *The National Interest* (June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004) - <https://nationalinterest.org/article/the-neoconservative-moment-811>; Frank P. Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic, and Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); John Mearsheimer, ‘Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism Versus Neoconservatism,’ *Open Democracy* (2005), 1-7.

<sup>142</sup> Brian Schmidt & Michael Williams, ‘The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realists,’ *Security Studies* 17:2 (2008), 191-220 (p. 194).

<sup>143</sup> Mearsheimer, p. 1.

with distinct views on both domestic and foreign policy.’<sup>144</sup> Irving Kristol, the father of Bill Kristol and the supposed ‘godfather of neoconservatism,’ considered neoconservatism to be a ‘persuasion’ rather than a philosophy.<sup>145</sup> Viewing neoconservatism as a ‘persuasion,’ Kristol asserted that the historical task and political purpose of neoconservatism ‘would seem to be this: to convert the Republican party, and American conservatism in general, against their respective wills, into a new kind of conservative politics suitable to governing a modern democracy.’<sup>146</sup> In 1995, Irving Kristol wrote *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* in which he attributed the philosophy of Leo Strauss, an influential critic of American liberalism, as having played a formative role in the development of neoconservatism.<sup>147</sup> Strauss’ sceptical philosophy ‘went to the very roots of modern liberalism and modern conservatism.’<sup>148</sup> In turn, during the invasion of Iraq, when the neoconservatives were being heavily scrutinized, Kristol wrote that he was surprised that the idea had been associated with foreign policy because ‘there is no set of neoconservative beliefs concerning foreign policy, only a set of attitudes derived from historical experience.’<sup>149</sup> These attitudes were: patriotism is healthy and natural and should be encouraged by private and public institutions, international institutions that strive for a world government should be regarded with suspicion, statesmen should have the ability to distinguish between friends and enemies, and a great power’s national interest does not refer simply to geography.<sup>150</sup>

Neoconservatives, therefore, largely believe in the virtues of American hegemony, that American power should be utilized to spread democracy and discourage rivals from

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<sup>144</sup> John Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 129.

<sup>145</sup> Irving Kristol, ‘The Neoconservative Persuasion,’ *Washington Examiner* (August 25, 2003) - <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/magazine/1328008/the-neoconservative-persuasion/>; Chengxin Pan & Oliver Turner, ‘Neoconservatism as Discourse: Virtue, Power and U.S. Foreign Policy,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 23:1 (2017), pp. 74-96.

<sup>146</sup> Kristol.

<sup>147</sup> Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> Kristol, p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> Kristol, ‘The Neoconservative Persuasion.’

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

competing, and that ‘military force is an extremely useful tool for shaping the world in ways that will benefit America.’<sup>151</sup> Jean Drolet thus described neoconservatism as a ‘peculiar synthesis of realism and idealism.’<sup>152</sup> During the Cold War, neoconservatives saw democracy promotion as a means of immunizing the periphery from communism and thereby rejected Henry Kissinger’s realist framework which accepted the legitimacy of the Soviet Union as a state and its ideology.<sup>153</sup> This, in turn, led to neoconservative officials in the Reagan administration – such as Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Robert Kagan – to advance democracy promotion ‘as an identity-conferring strategy of statecraft designed to make the international system safe for American hegemony in a world that is and will always be characterized by war, violence and geopolitical rivalry.’<sup>154</sup>

In 1996, a group of neoconservative intellectuals working for the think tank *Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies*, including individuals who became officials within the Bush administration, such as Perle, Feith, and David Wurmser, wrote the ‘Clean Break’ paper for incoming Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. They advocated for the new Israeli government to promote western values and traditions which ‘will be well received in the United States,’ and ‘includes “peace for peace,” “peace through strength” and self-reliance.’<sup>155</sup> The authors of the paper wrote that, ‘Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq – an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right – as a means of foiling Syria’s regional ambitions.’<sup>156</sup> When these individuals assumed power in the United States under

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<sup>151</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, p. 129.

<sup>152</sup> Jean F. Drolet, ‘A Liberalism Betrayed? American Neoconservatism and the Theory of International Relations,’ *Journal of Political Ideologies* 15:2 (2010), 89-118 (p. 91).

<sup>153</sup> Drolet, pp. 95-97.

<sup>154</sup> Drolet, p. 95.

<sup>155</sup> Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, ‘1996 A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.’ - <http://www.mafhoum.com/press7/realm2.htm>.

<sup>156</sup> Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, ‘1996 A Clean Break.’

George W. Bush, 9/11 provided an opportunity to implement these neoconservative strategic ambitions.

Such ideas, long championed by figures such as Wolfowitz, Perle, and Feith, framed the post-9/11 world as a decisive moment for American hegemony, in which military force could be harnessed not to just punish certain nations and groups in the Middle East, but to remake the region in accordance with western democratic sensibilities. For example, a March 8, 2002, Downing Street document said that since 1991 ‘our objective has been to re-integrate a law-abiding Iraq which does not possess W.M.D. or threaten its neighbours, into the international community.’<sup>157</sup> Implicitly, the document read, ‘this cannot occur with Saddam Hussein in power.’<sup>158</sup> Therefore, the Bush ‘administration has lost faith in containment and is now considering regime change.’<sup>159</sup> In early May 2003 journalist Seymour M. Hersch reported in *The New Yorker* on those who ‘call themselves, self-mockingly, the Cabal – a small cluster of policy advisers and analysts now based in the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans.’<sup>160</sup> In the past year, Hersch said, Bush administration officials admitted that the operation was conceived by Under Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Feith. They began their work in the days after September 11, 2001, and ‘have produced a skein of intelligence reviews that have helped to shape public opinion and American policy toward Iraq.’<sup>161</sup>

That operation began in mid-2002 when Wolfowitz created the Office of Special Plans (O.S.P.) to supply senior administration officials with raw, or unvetted, intelligence pertaining to Iraq.<sup>162</sup> Karen Kwiatkowski, a staff officer in the Pentagon, spoke out against

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<sup>157</sup> National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328, ‘Secret: UK Eyes Only. Iraq: Options Paper,’ p. 1. - <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/II-Doc01.pdf>

<sup>158</sup> National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>160</sup> Seymour M. Hersch, ‘Selective Intelligence,’ *The New Yorker* (May 4, 2003) - <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/05/12/selective-intelligence>

<sup>161</sup> Hersch, ‘Selective Intelligence.’;

<sup>162</sup> Such evidence, found by the OSP, referred to there being a relationship between Saddam Hussein’s regime and Al Qaeda.

this unit which she described as a ‘neoconservative capture of the policy-intelligence nexus in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq.’<sup>163</sup> Kwiatkowski claimed that she ‘witnessed neoconservative agenda bearers within O.S.P. usurp measured and carefully considered assessments, and through suppression and distortion of intelligence analysis promulgate what were in fact falsehoods.’<sup>164</sup> Although the Bush administration’s claims of Iraq’s supposed links with Al Qaeda and Saddam’s possession of weapons of mass destruction were being influenced, and discounted, by many channels of the intelligence community, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense later stated the O.S.P. was influential and persistent in making the case for war.<sup>165</sup> The intelligence which came out of the office, *The Guardian* reported, was based largely on that from Iraqi exiles, such as Ahmed Chalabi, and went directly to Bush who used some of it to justify war.<sup>166</sup> In sum, while it is contested that Bush was a neoconservative himself, especially in light of the first section’s exploration into his realist tendencies which he expressed during the 2000 campaign, Bush’s instinctive personality and leadership approach, which itself was compounded by 9/11, created a permissive environment for neoconservative, thus more hawkish, influences to gain prominence within the administration at that moment in history.<sup>167</sup>

#### Presidential Doctrines During Election Year 2004: Pre-Emptying the Narrative

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<sup>163</sup> Karen Kwiatkowski, ‘The New Pentagon Papers,’ *Salon* (March 10, 2004) - [https://www.salon.com/2004/03/10/osp\\_moveon/](https://www.salon.com/2004/03/10/osp_moveon/)

<sup>164</sup> Kwiatkowski.

<sup>165</sup> Inspector General, Department of Defense, “Review of the Pre-Iraqi War Activities of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy,” Report no. 07-INTEL-04, February 9, 2007. - <https://irp.fas.org/agency/dod/ig020907-decl.pdf>

<sup>166</sup> Duncan Campbell, ‘Bush Special Office “Justified War,”’ *The Guardian* (May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003) - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/may/31/iraq.usa>

<sup>167</sup> Iwan Morgan & Philip John Davies, *Assessing George W. Bush’s Legacy: The Right Man?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 121-143.

During presidential elections, candidates vie to define one another in their own terms in the attempt to deny the other authority and creditability as a viable national leader. Although Bush won the 2004 election against Democrat John Kerry, the war casualties depressed his vote and ‘had there been no war – or had casualties in Iraq been lower – Bush would have won re-election with an electoral college landslide.’<sup>168</sup> Concerns about negative information spreading in the media, such as the growing insurgency in Iraq, during this election year was of primary importance for the administration. For example, a memo written to Donald Rumsfeld in June 2004 by Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Peter Rodman, who nevertheless suggested that Democratic senators such as John Kerry and Joe Biden had made statements saying America must win in Iraq, ‘But they too probably feel the heat from the media reporting. The trick is to find a way to bring this strong consensus of our political class forward, so that *it* and not the negativism dominates the national discourse.’<sup>169</sup> Rumsfeld, in turn, in his own memo to Bush on June 7, 2004, highlighted the need of the administration to stress that the struggle could be won on the ground in Iraq and that it should stress that it can only be lost ‘if people come to the conclusion it cannot be done.’<sup>170</sup> Rumsfeld observed that, ‘This struggle is being waged during an era of 24-hour news, seven days a week – for the first time in history. And it is being waged during a Presidential election year, when there seems to be a suspension of civil discourse.’<sup>171</sup> During the 2004 election, an influential element of that discourse was informed by the debates

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<sup>168</sup> R. C. Eichneberg, R. J. Stoll, & M. Lebo, ‘War President: The Approval Ratings of George W. Bush,’ *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50:6 (2006), p. 784.

<sup>169</sup> Memo from Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs, Peter Rodman, to Secretary of Defense, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Subject: Your Memo “Some Thoughts on Iraq...” FOUO Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2400 Defense Pentagon, Washington D.C., 20301-2400, *Donald Rumsfeld Archive* - [https://www.rumsfeld.com/archives/default.asp?zoom\\_query=2004+presidential+election&zoom\\_per\\_page=10&zoom\\_sort=0&zoom\\_and=0&Tag+Level+1=-1%7E0&Tag+Level+2=-1%7E0](https://www.rumsfeld.com/archives/default.asp?zoom_query=2004+presidential+election&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_sort=0&zoom_and=0&Tag+Level+1=-1%7E0&Tag+Level+2=-1%7E0)

<sup>170</sup> Memo to President George W. Bush from Donald Rumsfeld, Subject: Thoughts on Iraq, June 8, 2004. *The Rumsfeld Archive* - [https://www.rumsfeld.com/archives/default.asp?zoom\\_query=2004+presidential+election&zoom\\_per\\_page=10&zoom\\_sort=0&zoom\\_and=0&Tag+Level+1=-1%7E0&Tag+Level+2=-1%7E0](https://www.rumsfeld.com/archives/default.asp?zoom_query=2004+presidential+election&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_sort=0&zoom_and=0&Tag+Level+1=-1%7E0&Tag+Level+2=-1%7E0)

<sup>171</sup> Memo to President George W. Bush from Donald Rumsfeld, Subject: Thoughts on Iraq, June 8, 2004.

regarding doctrines and how the candidates sought to define their opponent's in their own terms.

Bush criticized Kerry for being a 'flip flopper' and not having a firm stance on issues – especially relating to national security – like the former had taken. This was especially important for Bush to do given that Americans polled by Gallup, in September 2003, said that terrorism was one of the biggest issues influencing their choice for president.<sup>172</sup> By January 2004, Bush's approval rating was 60%.<sup>173</sup> His Democratic opponents, on the other hand, were seeking to make the failures in Iraq, such as going it alone without a United Nations resolution and misleading Congress by making decisions on faulty intelligence, the centrepiece of their criticisms.<sup>174</sup> Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan), lambasted the Bush administration when he declared that, 'The power of the Congress to declare war was usurped. The consent of the governed was obtained by manipulation rather than candid persuasion.'<sup>175</sup> Conyers then stated that the Bush doctrine 'means he plans to persuade Congress and the electorate that additional "preventive wars" are necessary. Will that advocacy be based on deception and false statements, too?'<sup>176</sup> In 2004, another congressman decried, 'Today, we are considering whether to endorse the Bush doctrine of domination' of which its pre-emptive and preventive thrusts were a rejection of the American tradition and international law.<sup>177</sup> Whereas Bush's opponents were now seeking to define his doctrine in their own terms, Bush defended it and his record.

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<sup>172</sup> Joseph Carroll, 'Economy, Terrorism Top Issues in 2004 Election Vote,' *Gallup News Service* (September 25, 2003) - <https://news.gallup.com/poll/9337/economy-terrorism-top-issues-2004-election-vote.aspx>

<sup>173</sup> Frank Newport, 'The 2004 Presidential Election,' *Gallup News Service* (January 6, 2004) - <https://news.gallup.com/poll/10147/2004-presidential-election.aspx>

<sup>174</sup> Newport, 'The 2004 Presidential Election.'

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, *Bush Administration Deceptions about Iraq Threaten Constitutional Democracy*. Vol. 149, No. 85. (Washington D.C., June 2003), pp. 1207-1208. - [https://irp.fas.org/congress/2003\\_cr/h061103.html](https://irp.fas.org/congress/2003_cr/h061103.html)

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., pp. 1207-1208.

<sup>177</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, *America's Preemptive War*. Vol. 150, No. 34 (Washington D.C., 2004), p. 212. - <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-150/issue-34/house-section/article/H1142-3>

During the 2004 campaign, Edwin Chen in the *Spokesman-Review* wrote that Bush began ‘using the phrase “Kerry Doctrine” while campaigning in Ohio and in a new ad released Saturday’ which Bush defined as having the potential to undermine American security.<sup>178</sup> Kerry responded arguing that he would never cede the security of Americans.<sup>179</sup> Bush ‘continued to portray John Kerry as a man who would relinquish U.S. sovereignty to foreign powers, arguing that under a “Kerry Doctrine” the Democratic nominee would seek approval from other countries before taking military action.’<sup>180</sup> Kerry was thus continuously presented as a ‘flip-flopper,’ someone who would waiver when America needed strength and resoluteness the most. ‘Look,’ Bush declared during a 2004 speech in Missouri, ‘no matter how many times my opponent flip-flops, we were right to make America safer by removing Saddam Hussein from power.’<sup>181</sup> During these remarks, after Bush had finished criticising Kerry, the crowd responded with chants of ‘FLIP-FLOP!’<sup>182</sup>

Scholars of political communication have commented that ‘the president has strong incentives to stay on message over time by continually using a set of favourable frames in order to reinforce support for his or her policy aims.’<sup>183</sup> Bush’s rhetorical invocation of a Kerry doctrine and superimposing his own definition of it as encapsulating a weak foreign policy posture defined by inconsistency and vacillation, as opposed to his own consistent and resolute leadership, can be seen as part of his attempt to undermine Kerry’s legitimacy as a prospective leader. Paul Masi argued that Bush ‘campaign hard on his record in the War on Terrorism, and his image as a strong, resolute leader...the campaign focused on matters of

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<sup>178</sup> Edwin Chen, ‘Bush Lambastes “Kerry Doctrine,”’ *The Spokesman-Review* (October 3, 2004) - <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2004/oct/03/bush-lambastes-kerry-doctrine/>

<sup>179</sup> Chen.

<sup>180</sup> Chen.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Remarks in Columbia, Missouri. September 7, 2004,’ in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2004 Book II – July 1 – September 30, 2004*, p. 1958.

<sup>182</sup> ‘Remarks in Columbia, Missouri. September 7, 2004,’ p. 1958.

<sup>183</sup> Rebecca A. Glazier & Amber E. Boydston, ‘The President, the Press, and the War: A Tale of Two Framing Agendas,’ *Political Communications* 29:1 (2012), p. 429.

national security.’<sup>184</sup> It is for this reason that Bush steered away from economic issues as Kerry was able to utilize that realm of policy as a weakness in his labelling of Bush which is why Bush orientated the campaign to issues of national security.

Although the race was tight, the Bush campaign and its proponents in the media were ultimately successful in defining Kerry as an unreliable leader who held inconsistent and strategically fallible ideas regarding national security. Polling found that voters were broadly aware of most of the character and policy criticisms being traded by the candidates, such as the charge that Kerry changes his mind too much and that Bush misled the public about the war in Iraq.<sup>185</sup> Among swing voters, in particular, the criticism that Kerry changes his mind too much was more damaging than the ‘charges that he supports a return to big government or is too liberal for the country.’<sup>186</sup> If the Kerry doctrine would reinstate diplomacy and deference, neoconservative writer Norman Podhoretz asserted that the ‘Bush Doctrine, then, was built on a repudiation of moral relativism and an entirely unapologetic assertion of the need for and the possibility of moral judgement in the realm of world affairs.’<sup>187</sup>

### **Presidential Leadership, the Bush Doctrine, and the War on Terror: 2005 – 2009**

Bush’s second term began in January 2005 and during both his inaugural speech and his State of the Union address, he reaffirmed the commitment of American foreign policy to spread freedom and democracy.<sup>188</sup> Bush, during his inaugural speech, said that, ‘The best hope for

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<sup>184</sup> Paul Masi, ‘The 2004 Presidential Election: Did Voters Bring Their Pocketbooks to the Polls?’ *Undergraduate Economic Review* 2:1 (2006), p. 2. - <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/uer/vol2/iss1/10/>

<sup>185</sup> ‘Race Tightens Again, Kerry’s Image Improves,’ *Pew Research Center* (October 20, 2004) - <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2004/10/20/race-tightens-again-kerrys-image-improves/>.

<sup>186</sup> ‘Race Tightens Again, Kerry’s Image Improves.’

<sup>187</sup> Norman Podhoretz, ‘Enter the Bush Doctrine,’ *The Wall Street Journal* (September 2, 2004) - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122703334532938091>

<sup>188</sup> CBS News, ‘George W. Bush Inaugural Address: Jan. 20, 2005,’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgLi6VcfRO4>

peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.’<sup>189</sup> Bush’s second inauguration address saw him use the words freedom and liberty – or variations such as ‘free’ and ‘liberating’ – 44 times.<sup>190</sup> The speech was written by Mike Gerson, and Bush himself. Gerson stood on the inaugural platform and claimed that he had ‘a more palpable sense that they were involved in an important historic mission.’<sup>191</sup> Every future president, thought Gerson, ‘would have to take the Bush Doctrine seriously. It would point a way through the coming decades.’<sup>192</sup> Gerson’s association of the inaugural address with an articulation of the doctrine was one indication that as the second term began, ensuring the doctrine was understood in terms acceptable to the administration was a key priority. These reaffirmations would be necessary in the face of mounting criticism within the polity. This is not to suggest, nonetheless, that there were not some recognized successes in the first term. For example, on December 19, 2003, Libya announced it would dismantle its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes. Some saw this decision as Libya’s desire to normalize relations with America, but some officials claimed ‘that Iraq’s example convinced Libya to renounce W.M.D.’<sup>193</sup>

The second *National Security Strategy*, published in 2006, read that the past four years had seen the United States of America made substantial progress in securing itself from terrorism.<sup>194</sup> This document stressed that ‘America is at war. This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we face – the rise of terrorism fuelled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder.’<sup>195</sup> ‘The path we have chosen,’ Bush’s epilogue

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War, Part III: State of Denial* (London: Pocket Books, 2006), p. 378.

<sup>191</sup> Woodward, p. 378.

<sup>192</sup> Woodward, p. 378.

<sup>193</sup> Sharon A. Squassoni & Andrew Feickert, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Disarming Libya: Weapons of Mass Destruction, p. CRS. 1. -

[https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/RS21823\\_04222004.pdf](https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/RS21823_04222004.pdf)

<sup>194</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C., 2006), p. 43. - <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>

<sup>195</sup> The White House, p. 1.

within the document stated, 'is consistent with the great tradition of American foreign policy. Like the policies of Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan, our approach is idealistic about our national goals, and realistic about the means to achieve them.'<sup>196</sup> Disagreements over whether Bush's foreign policy was consistent with previous traditions established in American foreign policy would be central to the contests over the Bush doctrine's definition during the second term.

### Legitimacy Waning: The Rhetorical Weaponization of Doctrine in the Second Term

In 2006, Karen Hughes, a key adviser to Bush, declared that Bush 'said spreading the message of freedom requires an aggressive effort to share and communicate America's fundamental values. He noted the war against terrorism will not be won by force of arms alone but in the battle of ideas.'<sup>197</sup> One key issue in the administration's battle of ideas was to defend its war in Iraq as an insurgency sprung out of the occupation and was causing serious setbacks to America's post-war reconstruction efforts. During an interview with Katie Couric of C.B.S News in September 2006, Bush admitted that 'one of the hardest parts of my job is to connect Iraq to the War on Terror.'<sup>198</sup> Needing to continuously make the connection to an ever weary and sceptical public, during a speech in Ohio in March 2006, Bush stated that, 'The doctrine that's really important and it's a change of attitude...it's going to require a change of attitude for a while is that when you see a threat, you *gotta* deal with it.'<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> Remarks at the Council on Foreign Relations, Karen Hughes, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, New York City, May 10, 2006. *U.S. Department of State Archive* - <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/us/66098.htm>

<sup>198</sup> Transcript: President Bush, Part 2, Special Reports *CBS News* (September 6, 2006) - <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-president-bush-part-2/>

<sup>199</sup> 'Remarks to the City Club of Cleveland and a Question-and-Answer Session in Cleveland, Ohio. March 20, 2006,' in United States Government Printing Office (ed), *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush 2006. Book 1 – January 1 to June 30, 2006*. (Washington D.C., 2010), p. 511.

Bush never failed to remind the American people of that threat and how the ‘country’s life changed on September the 11, 2001, and my attitude about the world changed that day’ and, after those attacks he asserted, ‘we changed our strategy.’<sup>200</sup> In April 2007, Bush claimed, ‘The doctrine is when you see a threat, we must take threats seriously, before they come here to hurt us’<sup>201</sup> ‘See, what changed on September the 11<sup>th</sup>,’ Bush reminded the audience, was that ‘oceans can no longer protect the people in the United States from harm. I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power, and so are the citizens of Iraq.’<sup>202</sup> Bush’s discourse during the second term, particularly surrounding the legitimization of the Iraq decision, which was now being seen as being based upon deception due to weapons of mass destruction not having been found, thus saw the president reaffirm his purpose by redirecting his so-called doctrine’s meaning to suit the circumstances of the moment at hand. In the second term, when weapons of mass destruction were not found, that meaning ‘shifted to a more ideological discourse, stressing that the United States had to make democracy work in Iraq.’<sup>203</sup>

The need to assert control over the Bush doctrine’s definition was thus felt acutely in the second term. Peter Feaver, who served in Bush’s National Security Council from 2005 to 2007, recollected to the author that,

One of my assignments from Hadley was to see whether I could pull the various candidate statements that were promulgated (usually by critics) as the “Bush doctrine” into a coherent single statement. I never completed that task to his satisfaction. Part of the reason is that there were already so many candidate “doctrines” – was it the “pre-

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<sup>200</sup> ‘Remarks to Military Personnel and Their Families at Fort Irwin, California, April 4, 2007,’ in *Public Papers of the Presidents, George W. Bush, Book I January 1 – June 30*, p. 389.

<sup>201</sup> ‘Remarks to Military Personnel and Their Families at Fort Irwin,’ p. 389.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>203</sup> Leffler, p. 248.

emption” doctrine, the idea that “state sponsors of terrorism would be treated as terrorists,” the “freedom agenda,” or several others? I developed a “unified field theory” of the Bush doctrine but it never got fully approved and blessed by Hadley, let alone the President.<sup>204</sup>

This recollection from Feaver is significant because it shows how in the second term there was such confusion over what the Bush doctrine now meant that the national security adviser felt it necessary to attempt to definitionally codify it into a coherent statement. However, since Bush, Cheney, and the media had defined it in various ways – sometimes similar and sometimes more distinctly – to one another at different moments, and reality on the ground was rendering the various definitions inoperable as a grand strategy to be executed evenly, such as pre-emptively attacking rogue states with nuclear weapons programmes, the administration needed to ensure the notion remained defined by them as best they could. Rice later said in an interview that the administration applied its ideology strategically in not militarily going after other axis of evil powers, such as Iran.<sup>205</sup> It is partly for this reason that in Bush’s discourse, ‘pre-emption’ later began to be used interchangeably with ‘prevention.’

In this light, during a speech at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Bush proclaimed that, ‘The doctrine of prevention is to work together to prevent Iranians from having a nuclear weapon. I know here in Washington prevention means force. It doesn’t mean force, necessarily. In this case, it means diplomacy.’<sup>206</sup> According to the Bush doctrine, as articulated throughout the first term, Iran was a state liable to having force

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<sup>204</sup> Written response from Peter Feaver, February 8, 2023. Feaver refers to Stephen Hadley who was Bush’s Deputy National Security Adviser during the first term, and then the National Security Adviser during the second.

<sup>205</sup> ‘Interview with Condoleezza Rice,’ *Hoover Institution* (2012).

<sup>206</sup> ‘Remarks at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and a Question-and-Answer Session. April 10, 2006,’ in United States Government Printing Office (ed). *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush 2006. Book 1 – January 1 to June 30, 2006.* (Washington D.C., 2010), p. 687.

used against it as was North Korea, another nation in the axis of evil. Yet, the administration did not use force against these states because, as Warren and Siracusa argued, ‘it is evident that the foremost plausible difference between these “threatening states” [such as Iraq and Afghanistan] at the time was their comparative military strength.’<sup>207</sup> National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley wrote a memorandum on January 30, 2006, within which he stated that the representatives of foreign governments ‘are keenly interested in our attitude toward the Iranian nuclear program.’<sup>208</sup> Hadley listed talking points about which officials should refer when discussing the Iranian nuclear programme. One of those talking points was the American objective to solve the issue diplomatically to help ‘the Iranian people achieve their fundamental human desire for freedom and democracy.’<sup>209</sup> Therefore, as it pertained to Iran, it was convenient to now associate the doctrine with diplomacy, instead of pre-emptive force, because this was the approach now being adopted to suit American strategic considerations.<sup>210</sup> Writing in 2007 on the fact the National Intelligence Estimate had declared Iran not to be a threat, Bill Press of the *Standard Speaker* wrote that the ‘Iran N.I.E. makes a mockery of the so-called “Bush Doctrine,” that military action is the primary vehicle for

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<sup>207</sup> Warren & Siracusa, p. 181.

<sup>208</sup> ‘Memo from Stephen Hadley re. Talking Points on Iran’s Nuclear Program and Hamas Victory in Elections,’ January 30, 2006, The White House, Washington D.C., *The Rumsfeld Archive*, p. 2 - <http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/3145/2006-01-30%20From%20Stephen%20J%20Hadley%20re%20Talking%20Points%20on%20Irans%20Nuclear%20Program%20and%20Hamas%20Victory%20in%20Elections.pdf#search=%22Iran%22>

<sup>209</sup> Memo from Stephen Hadley re. Talking Points on Iran’s Nuclear Program and Hamas Victory in Elections, pp. 3-4.

<sup>210</sup> Bush, p. 414. Bush, in his memoir, wrote that, ‘In the long run, our strategy was to isolate Iran and Syria as a way to reduce their influence and encourage change from within...I decided that the long-run benefits of keeping the pressure on Syria and Iran outweighed the short-run gains of striking further blows against Hezbollah.’

conducting foreign policy.’<sup>211</sup> The release of the report, Press stated, ‘was a clear repudiation of the Bush White House.’<sup>212</sup>

Similarly, Cheney later wrote that he disagreed with Secretary Rice’s removal of North Korea from the terrorist list, during the second term, ‘because it seemed to be a repudiation of the Bush Doctrine.’<sup>213</sup> Repudiation is an act which presidents must do to policies and frameworks of other presidents and eras to align their exercise of power with their own definition of the moment at hand.<sup>214</sup> The reversal of American policy on North Korea by reintroducing diplomatic negotiations during the second term of the Bush administration became a focal point in the ongoing debate over the application and credibility of the Bush doctrine.<sup>215</sup> The danger of these acknowledgments that certain decisions, such as the removal of North Korea from the terrorist list and identifying Iran as not being a threat, being admitted by both the media and the top officials as repudiating the president’s doctrine were indicators the president’s legitimacy was waning. The response to North Korea’s missile testing, the journalist Jay Bookman wrote, provides ‘overwhelming proof that the so-called Bush Doctrine, announced with such fanfare a few years ago, has proved a dismal failure and has been quietly abandoned even by the man who gave it his name.’<sup>216</sup>

In seeking to take control of the insurgency situation in Iraq, in January 2007, Bush announced that there would be a surge in the number of the troops in Iraq to gain control over

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<sup>211</sup> Bill Press, ‘Death of the Bush Doctrine,’ *Standard Speaker* (December 28, 2007), p. 8. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/504486684/?terms=Bush%20doctrine%20Iran&match=1>; U. S. Congressional Record. *H. Con. Res. 391 – 109<sup>th</sup> Congress: Expressing the Sense of Congress that the President Should Not Initiate Military Action Against Iran with Respect to its Nuclear Program Without First Obtaining Authorization from Congress.* (Washington D.C., April 2006). - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/391>

<sup>212</sup> Press, ‘Death of the Bush Doctrine,’ p. 8.

<sup>213</sup> Cheney, p. 488.

<sup>214</sup> Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>215</sup> Trudy Rubin, ‘The “Two Years Too Late” Policy,’ *The Herald-Sun*, (April 18, 2007), p. 9. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/795663837/?terms=Bush%20doctrine%20North%20Korea&match=1>

<sup>216</sup> Jay Bookman, ‘North Korea: Bush Bluster Backfires with Our Enemies,’ *Record Journal, Meriden, Connecticut*, (July 11, 2006), p. M21 - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/678624200/?terms=Bush%20doctrine%20North%20Korea&match=1>

the insurgency there.<sup>217</sup> Bush addressed the nation by saying that America would change its strategy to put down sectarian violence and bring security to Iraq. ‘This would require increasing American force levels, Bush warned. ‘So, I have committed more than twenty thousand additional American troops to Iraq.’<sup>218</sup> The surge was a controversial and risky decision, but it was presented as necessary to achieve the goals of ensuring that Al Qaeda terrorists were defeated in Iraq and the situation did not escalate violence to such a degree where those terrorists could once again threaten America.<sup>219</sup> The Iraq Study Group, chartered by Congress and led by former secretary of state James Baker and Lee Hamilton, issued a report on December 6, 2006, arguing that though the primary mission of American forces should evolve to one of supporting the Iraqi army, America could ‘support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad.’<sup>220</sup> There was, consequently, some political support for a surge of troops in Iraq. Rove admitted, however, that Bush’s televised address announcing the decision ‘was not well received...At this point, people were not interested in words. They wanted results. On Iraq, we had little credibility left with the public.’<sup>221</sup>

### The 2008 Election: Doctrines, Legacy, and the Future of the War on Terror

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<sup>217</sup> AP Archive, ‘Bush Announces Iraq Troop Surge – 2007 | Today in History | 10 Jan 17.’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1upGEPdaBU>

<sup>218</sup> AP Archive, ‘Bush Announces Iraq Troop Surge – 2007 | Today in History | 10 Jan 17.’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1upGEPdaBU>

<sup>219</sup> ‘Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, August 22, 2007,’ in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2007 Book II July 1 – December 31*, p. 1105.

<sup>220</sup> Karl Rove, *Courage and Consequence: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), p. 479; James A. Baker III & Lee H. Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (Washington D.C.: Vintage Books, 2006) - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-IRAQSTUDYGROUP/pdf/GPO-IRAQSTUDYGROUP.pdf>

<sup>221</sup> Rove, p. 480.

Writing in the fall of 2008, neoconservative Joshua Muravchik contended that Bush deserved applause for not only declaring a War on Terror but for recognising the war needed to rest on a political strategy.<sup>222</sup> In undertaking that role, Muravchik wrote, Bush rejected the counsel of various European and United Nations' officials as well as 'the editorialists of *The New York Times* who held that the "root cause" of terrorism was poverty.'<sup>223</sup> Bush argued that the root cause of terrorism lay in the 'authoritarian, zero-sum political habits of the region.'<sup>224</sup> Though Rice spoke of the need for a generational commitment to the political transformation of the Middle East, by 2008, this was a far-cry.<sup>225</sup> In 2008, the Republican presidential candidate John McCain spoke of how he would be a realistic idealist by recognising that power in the world was more 'widely and evenly distributed' which meant America could not lead by virtue of its power alone.<sup>226</sup> To McCain, this meant strengthening alliances and not relying on going it alone as the Bush administration had done.<sup>227</sup> Obama said he would focus on ending the war in Iraq responsibly, finishing the fight against Al Qaeda, securing nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue nations, and rebuilding America's alliances.<sup>228</sup> In Obama's attack on McCain's political identity, his charge was that the latter was 'offering nothing more than an extension of the Bush presidency, that he will be John McSame.'<sup>229</sup> Kori Schake, who worked on the McCain campaign, wrote to the author that the Bush administration's failures in Iraq were the biggest issues facing the campaign in terms of

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<sup>222</sup> Muravchik, p. 61.

<sup>223</sup> Muravchik, p. 61.

<sup>224</sup> Muravchik, p. 62.

<sup>225</sup> *Dawn*, U.S. Commitment to Iraq Termed Generational: Rice's Interview, (June 21, 2005) - <https://beta.dawn.com/news/144404/us-commitment-to-iraq-termed-generational-rice-s-interview>

<sup>226</sup> *The New York Times*, John McCain's Foreign Policy Speech, (March 26, 2008) - <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/26/us/politics/26text-mccain.html#:~:text=We%20can't%20torture%20or,thing%20as%20international%20good%20citizenship>.

<sup>227</sup> McCain's Foreign Policy Speech.

<sup>228</sup> *The Guardian*, Full Text: Obama's Foreign Policy Speech, (July 16, 2008) - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/16/uselections2008.barackobama#:~:text=I%20will%20focus%20this%20strategy,our%20alliances%20to%20meet%20the>

<sup>229</sup> Jonathan Freedland, 'US Election: Leadership Finally Takes the Fight to John McSame,' *The Guardian* (August 27, 2008) - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/27/uselections2008.democrats20087>

foreign policy, but that despite McCain taking issue with the ‘chin out unilateralism of the Bush approach’ that she remembered ‘thinking from my time in the N.S.C. that Bush had the right strategy but executed it so poorly that the doctrine would be discredited for a generation.’<sup>230</sup>

One of the most memorable moments of the 2008 election was when the Republican vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, during an interview with A.B.C.’s Charlie Gibson, was asked about her opinion on the Bush doctrine and did not know what it was despite the interviewer’s prompts.<sup>231</sup> Initially, she responded back to Gibson asking if he meant Bush’s worldview to which Gibson, in turn, responded by saying he meant the principle that America had the right to use pre-emptive force. Although Palin was known for not being knowledgeable on – essentially – any policy matter, other commentators conceded that, ‘I’m not sure anyone is entirely clear on what the Bush Doctrine is at this particular moment.’<sup>232</sup> This thesis has shown that all presidential doctrines can mean different things to different actors and different moments during a presidency. Nonetheless, Palin’s ignorance on the doctrine’s meaning spoke to the broader issue of the Bush doctrine’s meaninglessness as an expression of American foreign policy by 2008. Jeff Jacoby of the *Boston Globe* wrote that, ‘For some time now it has been apparent that the Bush Doctrine – with the single exception of Iraq – didn’t survive the Bush presidency.’<sup>233</sup> *Washington Post* journalist Daniel Froomkin reflected this when he said that there have been ‘several Bush doctrines over the years’ in that various statements given by the administration have been framed as such, but that, ‘The one

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<sup>230</sup> Written response from Kori Schake, July 9, 2024.

<sup>231</sup> ABC World News with Charlie Gibson, ‘Sarah Palin Holds Forth on Bush Doctrine, Pakistan,’ September 11, 2008 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z75QSExE0jU&t=74s>

<sup>232</sup> Dan Froomkin, ‘What is the Bush Doctrine, Anyway?’ *Washington Post* (September 12, 2008) - [http://busharchive.froomkin.com/BL2008091201471\\_pf.htm](http://busharchive.froomkin.com/BL2008091201471_pf.htm)

<sup>233</sup> Jeff Jacoby, ‘What About the Bush Doctrine?’ *Boston Globe* (May 28, 2008), p. 28. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/444311457/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>

thing all these Bush doctrines have in common is that they are, at this point, utterly inoperative.’<sup>234</sup>

These passages made in 2008 reveal that at the end of the Bush presidency, when popular fatigue had set in vis a vis the Iraq war, Bush’s defining message was being judged to not only have been repudiated by the administration’s own policies that were contradicting how it itself had defined the doctrine in the early War on Terror period, but also by the events it was being used to legitimize themselves; especially as success in Iraq seemed too far off. Defending Palin from this apparent gaffe, in September 2008 Charles Krauthammer noted that, ‘Presidential doctrines are inherently malleable and difficult to define.’ The only fixed doctrines in American history, Krauthammer argued, were the Monroe and Truman doctrines, ‘which came out of single presidential statements during administrations where there were few conflicting foreign policy crosscurrents. Such is not the case with Bush doctrine. Yes, Palin didn’t know what it is. But neither does Gibson.’<sup>235</sup> ‘I know something about the subject because, as the Wikipedia entry on the Bush doctrine notes,’ Krauthammer wrote, ‘I was the first to use the term.’<sup>236</sup>

The Democratic candidate Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election. Jason Ralph noted that the presidency of Obama – to the surprise of many liberal internationalists – represented ‘change within a broader continuity’ regarding American policy in the War on Terror.<sup>237</sup> However, the discourse and debate surrounding Obama’s approach to presidential power and American foreign policy was still very much overshadowed by the ideas, and policy practices, codified within the Bush doctrine (such as pre-emption, spreading democracy, and unilateralism), and whether or not Obama had repudiated them.<sup>238</sup> This

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<sup>234</sup> Froomkin.

<sup>235</sup> Krauthammer, p. 21.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>237</sup> Ralph, p. 21.

<sup>238</sup> Richard Adams, ‘An Obama Doctrine or the Bush Doctrine by Another Name?’ *The Guardian* (March 29, 2011) - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/richard-adams-blog/2011/mar/29/obama-doctrine-libya-bush-palin>;

second-guessing was a result of Obama not scaling back Bush's War on Terror, but expanding it into more countries through using drone strikes and kill lists. In 2011, as people began to search for an Obama doctrine, Fareed Zakaria declared that, 'In fact, the search itself is misguided. The doctrinal approach to foreign policy doesn't make much sense anymore...In today's multipolar, multi-layered world, there is no central hinge upon which all American foreign policy rests.'<sup>239</sup> At the time of writing, the search continues.<sup>240</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed how the Bush doctrine was rhetorically utilized to facilitate and undermine the legitimization of the Bush administration's policy choices. It has argued that the Bush administration, particularly the president and vice president, invoked the doctrine in their discourse to define their foreign policy in a way which presented it as a necessary repudiation of redundant policy frameworks in the post-9/11 milieu. After 9/11, the administration came to believe that America needed to respond robustly by militarily going after those who were responsible for the attacks, who harboured those responsible and other terror groups (and who could potentially do harm to Americans in the future), and to spread democracy in place of terror and repression. The choices to invade Afghanistan and Iraq were both legitimized by these broad (and salient) American foreign policy principles which were,

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Tim Mak, 'Rummy: Bush Doctrine now Obama's,' *Politico* (September 7, 2011) - <https://www.politico.com/story/2011/09/rummy-bush-doctrine-now-obamas-062803#:~:text=Many%20policies%20are%20still%20in,years%20later%2C%20Rumsfeld%20said.&text=For mer%20Defense%20Secretary%20Donald%20Rumsfeld,he%20campaign ed%20on%20in%202008>.

<sup>239</sup> Fareed Zakaria, 'Stop Searching for an Obama Doctrine,' *Washington Post* (July 6, 2011) - [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/stop-searching-for-an-obama-doctrine/2011/07/06/gIQAQMm1IH\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/stop-searching-for-an-obama-doctrine/2011/07/06/gIQAQMm1IH_story.html)

<sup>240</sup> Ravi Agrawal, 'Is There a Biden Doctrine?' *Foreign Policy* (February 2, 2023) - <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/02/biden-doctrine-russia-china-defense-policy/>; Thomas L. Friedman, 'A Biden Doctrine for the Middle East is Forming. And It's Big,' *The New York Times* (January 31, 2024) - <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/31/opinion/biden-iran-israel.html>; Steven A. Cook, 'The "Biden Doctrine" Will Make Things Worse,' *Foreign Policy* (February 9, 2024) - <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/09/biden-doctrine-israel-palestine-middle-east-peace/>

on numerous occasions, presented to the polity by the president and vice president as a doctrine. On other occasions, however, when it appeared that the administration was indecisive about what line of action it would take, the administration sometimes redirected the meaning of the doctrine to control the definition of the choices it was making; such as pursuing a diplomatic resolution to Iran's nuclear question rather than using military force as in Iraq.

Opponents of the administration's decisions and critics in the media came to scrutinize choices by second-guessing the overarching doctrine's meaning and relevance and superimposing their own definition of it in ways which either highlighted inconsistencies in decision-making or which highlighted the strategically fallacious assumptions upon which the doctrine was based. In this light, the Bush doctrine was constructed and evolved in a context-driven manner; depending on whether the agent invoking it sought to define it in a way which sustained or undermined the administration's narrative justifying foreign policy choices. From the beginning of his presidency, Bush conveyed a leadership posture that was conscious of the need to control how he was politically defined. Although the response to 9/11 directed the trajectory of his presidency, the Bush doctrine was radical not in terms of the principles it sometimes codified. It was unique, in the pantheon of presidential doctrines, in the way the administration frequently appealed to it to legitimize its choices.

## Conclusion

This thesis has examined how presidential doctrines were rhetorically utilized by actors in politics and media during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. The purpose was to determine how broader perceptions regarding the existence of these presidents' doctrines, or lack thereof, contributed to the legitimization or de-legitimation of their policy choices and overall approaches to foreign policy leadership. Consequently, the study provided a comprehensive historical examination into how influential agents in the American polity – including administration officials, journalists, and legislators – have wielded their definitions of presidential doctrines for and against their namesake's interests. By addressing these issues, this thesis demonstrated that the historical value of doctrines, which has heretofore gone overlooked, lay not in their ability to influence and/or codify unilateral shifts in foreign policymaking objectively. Rather, their value lay in how they are subjectively identified for political purposes by either rationalising or scrutinising the policy choices and articulated principles in the beholder's own terms.

In the case of the four presidents under study, they each inherited certain policy practices from the other, yet also faced distinctive challenges arising out of the circumstances during which they were president. Each rhetorically communicated their priorities differently and with varying degrees of success. Each one's foreign policy had continuities and discontinuities in how they dealt with the perceived threats of their time. How contemporaries in the American polity understood, debated, agreed, and disagreed about these issues and themes led some of them to discern – at their own discretion and according to their political biases and agendas – strategic and rhetorical threads in these presidents' foreign policy statements and decisions; which they, in turn, labelled as the president's 'doctrine.' By doing so, this thesis has shown that despite the differences in circumstances with which the four

presidents under study had to face, as well as the differences in which each was confronted with the prospect of becoming associated with their own doctrine to address those circumstances, what transpired in the rhetorical utilization of their purported doctrines were certain themes and connotations which began to be established in the early nineteenth century.

Those themes and connotations primarily related to how individuals thought their identification, attribution, and/or declaration of a doctrine could facilitate or undermine the legitimation of a certain course of action. Those who conferred a doctrine upon statements and policy practices, within a context which criticized a president's foreign policy choices, usually did so by pointing out inconsistencies and fallacies in decisions made and attached them to a doctrine the president may or may not have endorsed. Those who did so within a context which rationalized a president's choices presented the doctrine as a necessary repudiation of purportedly redundant policy frameworks that the president would redress through the doctrine. Doctrines have thus served to subjectively codify the forging of a new path going forward which everyone can readily glom on to and, in this regard, influence the narrative about the president's leadership projects by being defined at the beholder's whim. In this way, presidential doctrines have provided a superficially plausible concept to deep and complicated questions about how to formulate and execute policy, how presidents lead the nation, and seek to protect its security in an uncertain world.

In this way, one potential reason why there exists less ambiguity about Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush having had doctrines, as compared to George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, is not because the former presidents endorsed them as operative during their presidencies.<sup>4</sup> Rather, because in their cultural moments the Reagan and (second) Bush

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<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (Texas: Virgin Books, 2011), p. 396; Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (Simon & Schuster: London, 1989), p. 107.

doctrines codified principles and policy practices aimed at dealing with ostensibly graver existential geopolitical circumstances than did the so-called (first) Bush or Clinton doctrines. In turn, the discursive reproductions of the former doctrines were undertaken within historical contexts defined by insecurity about the nation's future either from the threat of superpower confrontation or catastrophic terrorism.<sup>5</sup> The implications of this being that the rhetorical value of a given doctrine is partly determined by its stability and penetrance in the national debate; which is – itself – determined by the circumstances which bring its construction forth.

For example, Heiko Meiertons argues that though Bush Senior issued statements that discussed criteria for the use of force and which established a direction for American diplomacy in the post-Cold War era, these were not considered 'in the opinion of the U.S. Government to be a binding concept and labelled by it as a "doctrine," which would be required in order to consider the Bush Doctrine a doctrine.'<sup>6</sup> However, as the chapter on the former can testify, during the first Bush presidency, the 'Bush doctrine' label was utilized widely in the discourse surrounding his leadership over foreign affairs; including occasionally by administration officials. The first Bush administration also produced numerous official *National Security Strategy* documents establishing directions the nation was moving on a number of issues, including nuclear strategy and in presenting the outlines of what American global leadership would prioritize in a post-Soviet world, and it was comfortable in the use of American military force to pacify regional instabilities in favour of American priorities.<sup>7</sup> Bush and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft did not wish to

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony M. Eames, *A Voice in Their Own Destiny: Reagan, Thatcher, and Public Diplomacy in the Nuclear 1980s* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2023), p. 149. Public approval for initiatives, such as the Strategic Defense Initiative, 'was tied directly to the notion that it could offer an impenetrable shield for the civilian population rather than intermediate defenses of silos.'; Karl Rove, *Courage and Consequence: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), p. 257. Bush realised on Air Force One that 9/11 was a 'defining moment in the history of the United States. I didn't need any legal briefs. I didn't need any consultations. I knew we were at war.'

<sup>6</sup> Heiko Meiertons, *The Doctrines of U.S. Security Policy: An Evaluation under International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 174.

<sup>7</sup> Lamont Colucci, 'American Doctrine: The Foundation of Grand Strategy,' *World Affairs* 181:2 (2018), 133-160 (p. 139). Colucci argued that 'those presidents least comfortable using American power are the ones without

label the lessons and principles spawning out of these decisions as doctrines which, perhaps, was a reflection of them needing to manage the Cold War's end through adhering to pragmatism.

The plausible explanations, then, for the greater definitional stability and penetrance some presidential doctrines have over others in political discourse, which can be drawn from this work, stem from the differences of global circumstances with which presidents had to deal; how these presidents employed rhetoric to legitimize their policy choices; the influence of certain ideas and people surrounding the president during their presidencies; and – ultimately – how their contemporaries comprehended all of these factors. It is now necessary to provide a final analysis on these themes, one by one, as they manifested in the rhetorical expression of presidential doctrine during the four presidencies under study.

### **Continuities and Contrasts**

The international system provided external constraints which each president had to face in their formulation of foreign policy. Those constraints mainly took 'the shape of other states and their foreign policies.'<sup>8</sup> Reagan assumed the presidency within the same international system and epoch with which his seven immediate predecessors engaged: the Cold War defined by its bipolarity with America and the Soviet Union constituting the two main poles of power in the system. Although the policy practice of supporting anti-communists in the third world to overturn left-wing governments as part of a strategy to chip away at the Soviet empire, which became known as the Reagan doctrine, were not ideas exclusive to the Reagan

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a coherent doctrine... or with less-than-successful doctrines.'; Matthew Moten, *Presidents and Their Generals* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 312. General Colin Powell once said of Bush that he, more than any other recent president, understood the proper use of military force which required political and military objectives and the employment of decisive means to achieve results.

<sup>8</sup> James Bilsland, *The President, the State, and the Cold War: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Presidents Truman and Reagan* (Glasgow: Routledge, 2013), p. 250.

administration, the debates over the implications of that supposed doctrine were punctuated during a turbulent 1980s; a time of global tension defined by the threat of nuclear war, two major wars running through the decade (Soviet-Afghan and the Iran-Iraq wars), the growing rise of terrorism, and the internal reforms of the Soviet Union causing the weakening of its control over its satellites and its eventual collapse.<sup>9</sup> In that context, and with the Reagan administration providing consistent indications regarding where it was moving on issues to navigate that turbulent bipolar international system, such as supporting rebels and forging more muscular strategic defense initiatives, broader perceptions about the existence of an operative Reagan doctrine were reinforced by Reagan's proponents – in politics and media – to sustain the legitimacy of those choices. They did so by defending Reagan's choices, regardless of how controversial and/or illegal, as morally and strategically sound through affirming them as not only necessarily bold and repudiatory to tackle the Soviet existential threat, but as part of a comprehensive framework reflective of the president's pro-freedom worldview.<sup>10</sup>

Contrarily, the first Bush doctrine and the Clinton doctrine were constructed during the early post-Cold War period when American leadership was preeminent.<sup>11</sup> Though the collapse of communism in eastern Europe fundamentally reconstituted the nature of the international system from bipolar to unipolar, the changes were not existential to the survival of the United States and, in fact, augmented its primacy as the system's most powerful state actor. Though the first Bush doctrine was a highly contested linguistic entity over which critics and supporters of the president's decisions battled to define, including some

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War 1985-1991* (London: Public Affairs, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Doyle McManus, 'U.S. Shaping Assertive Policy for Third World: "Reagan Doctrine" Would Actively Support Rebellions Against Unfriendly Leftist Regimes,' *Los Angeles Times* (June 16, 1985) - <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-06-16-mn-2681-story.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment,' *Foreign Affairs* (January 1, 1990) - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1990-01-01/unipolar-moment>

administration officials, its lack of influence in shaping political and academic discourse since Bush left office is partly a result of the birth of American preponderance during the first Bush presidency which created a system not conducive for its first two presidents, Bush and Clinton, to get stuck in a doctrinal straitjacket that became potentially dysfunctional within a system whose parameters were continuously changing. In the case of Clinton, his principal foreign policy advisers continuously stressed this, albeit articulated in different terms, in favour of a need to be pragmatic in their idealism.<sup>12</sup>

Although the second Bush doctrine was identified by agents in the media before September 11, 2001 to broadly codify unilateral shifts the administration was taking in its nuclear weapons and arms control policies, its penetrance into political and academic debates was clearly catapulted by the administration's unwavering commitment to retaliate after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, combined with the president and vice president's frequent invocation of the term 'doctrine' to rationalize what that retaliation would be.<sup>13</sup> As the previous chapter showed, the Bush administration's rhetorical invocation of its doctrine, and its frequent articulation of what it defined, was done to facilitate the legitimization of its launching of a War on Terror. 9/11 divided the history of American foreign policy into a before and after.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it is global circumstances which largely determines the rhetoric used to legitimize the policy choices available to deal with those circumstances.

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<sup>12</sup> Madeleine K. Albright, 'Doing the Right Thing in a Pragmatic Way,' in Rosanna Perotti (ed.), *Presidency in the United States: Foreign Policy in the Clinton Administration*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019), pp. 11-12.

<sup>13</sup> William D. Hartung, 'Return to MAD-ness,' *The Columbian* (December 25, 2000), p. 27. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/818286504/?terms=Bush%20doctrine&match=1>; Charles Krauthammer, 'The Bush Doctrine,' *CNN* (February 26, 2001) - <https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/time/2001/03/05/doctrine.html>; Charles Krauthammer, 'The Bush Doctrine,' *The Washington Post* (May 3, 2001) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2001/05/04/the-bush-doctrine/429494df-7848-4e2f-a30b-2f510a159942/>

<sup>14</sup> Michael Cox, 'Paradigm Shifts and 9/11: International Relations After the Twin Towers,' *Security Dialogue* 33:2 (2002), 247-251; 'Remarks to Military Personnel and Their Families at Fort Irwin, California, April 4, 2007,' in *Public Papers of the Presidents, George W. Bush, Book I January 1 – June 30*, p. 389. In a speech, Bush said that the 'country's life changed on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and my attitude about the world changed that day' and, after those attacks, he asserted, 'we changed our strategy.'

Reagan has been named the great communicator due to being an effective orator in communicating what he said were basic truths that the average American citizen instinctively recognized.<sup>15</sup> In his rhetoric during the first term, Reagan used more confrontational language to throw the Soviets on the defensive. Despite adopting a more conciliatory approach in his diplomacy with Mikhail Gorbachev, throughout the 1980s Reagan consistently utilized highly moralistic language and defended his more controversial policies, such as supporting the Contras in Nicaragua, as being components of a wider struggle between good and evil, tyranny and freedom, that created a discursive environment that resonated deeply with certain elements in the American polity; particularly conservatives.<sup>16</sup> Such a rhetorical strategy not only galvanized public support for his policies but also lent a sense of historical significance and moral righteousness to his administration's (sometimes, illegal) actions. The consistent use of such rhetoric, coupled with Reagan's charisma and ability to connect with audiences, contributed to a more widespread definitional understanding of what Reagan's doctrines were from as early as 1980 in encapsulating his overarching idealistic approach to the Cold War.

Contrarily, George H.W. Bush has been viewed as a not-so-great communicator. Martin J. Medhurst claimed Bush did not understand the public role that a president must master and referred to Bush as a reluctant communicator.<sup>17</sup> Chapter three demonstrated that on two occasions, Scowcroft rejected the labelling of certain strategies signalling a departure from the containment of the Cold War as the 'Bush doctrine' despite other administration officials wishing to do so and their being reported as doing so in the press.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the

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<sup>15</sup> Ken Holden, *The Making of the Great Communicator: Ronald Reagan's Transformation From Actor to Governor* (California: Lyons Press, 2013); Frederick J. Ryan jr. (ed), *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Henry Nau, November 27, 2023. Nau stated to the author: 'Look, here's another example, I think, in the case of Pipes and the hardliners like Bill Clark, Bill Casey on the one hand, and then the negotiators like Matlock and George Shultz. Reagan needed both. And he made it clear, not directly but indirectly, he made it clear that he was going to give the emphasis in 81 and 82 to the hardliners. He was going to give the emphasis to the Clarks and the Allen's and the Pipes' and the Casey's. And he did. He did.'

<sup>17</sup> Martin J. Medhurst (ed), *The Rhetorical Presidency of George H.W. Bush* (Texas: Texas A&M Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Martin Walker, 'Bush Calls for Action on Communist Crisis,' *The Guardian* (July 14, 1989) - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/260244003/?terms=Bush%20Doctrine&match=1>, p. 10.

Reagan and George W. Bush administrations, who were both comfortable in using moralistic language and becoming associated with doctrinal-like statements, those presidents either less comfortable in using moralistic rhetoric and/or being more pragmatic in their approach to decision-making see the rhetorical employment of doctrines as a conceit with connotations of vanity more than as an effective strategic frame. Other administrations, such as Clinton's, had a chief executive who was a highly skilled politician who understood the importance of rhetoric, but saw doctrines as strategically constricting to legitimize policy shifts.

Despite the Clinton administration publishing seven *National Security Strategy* documents, as well making decisions which possessed a coherent strategic thread to enlarge the number of democracies, the size of NATO, and fundamentally to continue to legitimize American global engagement, the 'Clinton doctrine' label, and the term 'doctrine' more broadly, were officially rejected due to the rationale that it was too constricting.<sup>19</sup> In turn, although there has been some scholarship wondering whether or not there was such a Clinton doctrine of which scholars, like political commentators and politicians during the presidency, have superimposed their own retroactive definitions, the administration's continuous avoidance of associating their statements and choices as doctrines should make scholars question why they wish to apply a doctrinal classification when the administration did not.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the clarity of vision and determination of the second Bush administration to execute the War on Terror on its own terms, as it set its own rhetorical markers of success, saw the president evoke a doctrine and redirect its meaning when necessary to control the political definition of his choices.<sup>21</sup> Choices which were being influenced by elements in his

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<sup>19</sup> James D. Boys, *Clinton's Grand Strategy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 269-270.

<sup>20</sup> John Dumbrell, 'Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton's Foreign Policy Reconsidered,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13:2 (2002), 43-56 (p. 43).

<sup>21</sup> Karen DeYoung, 'Allies Are Cautious On "Bush Doctrine,"' *The Washington Post* (October 15, 2001) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/10/16/allies-are-cautious-on-bush-doctrine/9719022e-d6c4-4942-b9d0-735ba80a42f9/>

administration who had been pushing for certain actions, such as the invasion of Iraq, for years prior to the decision being made.<sup>22</sup>

In this way, the ideas of those around the president about how to communicate policy were important factors in popularising doctrines. In the case of Bill Clinton and his triangulation strategy of standing above the dogmas of both left and right to move the Democrats to the center, his administration was averse to not necessarily associating with certain principles, such as Wilsonian democratic peace, but in framing those principles in terms which could be construed as being products of constrained thinking and orthodoxy. This, in turn, saw some officials say they ‘always resist doctrine,’ as Sandy Berger put it in 1999, and not want to get ‘locked in,’ as Al Gore put it in December 1992, to a doctrine defined in a specific manner that would create pressure to use force in ostensibly similar situations; therefore, reducing the freedom to choose and shift course.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the first Bush and Clinton doctrines were politicized concepts whose meanings evolved according to the decisions, and indecisions, of these administrations. However, relative to the Reagan and second Bush doctrines, the definitions of the former two were more fleeting since third party actors, predominantly in the media, conferred and defined them on behalf of these administrations with no clarifications and/or corrections by those administrations as to what their ‘doctrine’ officially defined.

In large part, this was because influential people who had these presidents’ ears rejected rationalising foreign policy decision-making in doctrinal terms. This is contrasted with other administrations studied in this thesis, such as Richard Nixon’s, Reagan’s, and George W. Bush’s, whose officials either internally discussed what the president’s doctrine

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<sup>22</sup> Ola Tunander, ‘War on Terror and Transformation of World Order,’ presented at Change and Adaptation – Contemporary Security Challenges and NATO, 14-16 May, 2004 - <https://www.prio.org/publications/3211>

<sup>23</sup> Doyle McManus, ‘Samuel Berger,’ *Los Angeles Times* (July 25, 1999) - <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-jul-25-op-59356-story.html>; John Omicinski, ‘Clinton Doctrine: One Size Fits All,’ *The News-Messenger* (December 14, 1992), p. 4. - <https://www.newspapers.com/image/304464613/?terms=Clinton%20Doctrine&match=1>

defined and implied for its policy choices or clarified any perceived contradictions and inconsistencies within how they understood – or at least sought to present – its application to members of the press and/or Congress.<sup>24</sup> Thereby making the influence of prominent foreign policy individuals of great importance in controlling the administration's narrative over the president's decisions in foreign policy.

Lastly, the final element in the equation as to why the Reagan and second Bush doctrines had more definitional stability than the first Bush and Clinton doctrines, during their respective presidencies, is due to how their contemporaries collectively understood the other factors just discussed. Referring back to the previous chapters, it is clear that despite the threats each president faced, although those threats were grave in their own right, the national security milieu of the 1980s and 2000s were respectively defined by discourses of much more intense and existential concerns. Consequently, though it should be clear at this point that presidential doctrines are malleable concepts, definitionally slippery, and concern different things to different people for political reasons, Reagan and Bush jr.'s moralistic and belligerent rhetoric were directed toward single existential enemies (however shadowy) that Bush sr. and Clinton were not threatened with to the same extent. The latter two were leaders during periods when there was great optimism, within the polity, about America's position in the post-Cold War world.

Though disagreements existed about how America should employ its power, for which the discourse of the respective doctrines were centralized, the broader national debate was informed by varying opinions about how America should consolidate its pre-eminence

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<sup>24</sup> Sidney Blumenthal, 'The Reagan Doctrine's Strange History,' *The Washington Post* (June 28, 1986) - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1986/06/29/the-reagan-doctrines-strange-history/2b47b9c0-613d-4a06-962b-d8cae0c6aded/>; Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon & Schuster), p. 395; 'Remarks at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and a Question-and-Answer Session. April 10, 2006,' in United States Government Printing Office (ed). *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush 2006. Book 1 – January 1 to June 30, 2006.* (Washington D.C., 2010), p. 687.

rather than combat a perceivable existential threat. This led to speculations after any decision and/or statement was made, such as intervening to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe arising out of regional instability or committing to the expansion of democratic states with free markets, about whether they now defined a new presidential doctrine. In the case of Reagan and Bush jr., the discourses about their purported doctrines still included uncertainties about what they implied for American foreign policy, but they were much tighter because their foreign policies were largely informed by specific initiatives designed toward confronting identifiable enemies.

### **Insights for Future Studies on Presidential Doctrines**

The term ‘doctrine’ is politically loaded in American discourse. Most presidents provide indications of where they are going in foreign policy. However, whether that statement or policy decision is their doctrine is at the discretion of the agent conferring it and their reasons for doing so. This thesis has problematized the criteria scholars use when determining whether a president had a doctrine or not by highlighting the subjective and politicized nature of identifying and defining presidential doctrines in political discourse. It has done so through the extensive use of a wide variety of historical data, and original oral history interviews. Future studies in political science and/or history, must take the analysis of this wide variety of data presented herein when they seek to determine the consequences for presidents if they associate with a doctrine, the discursive origins of doctrines, and/or if scholars seek to provide a new conceptual definition.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ravi Agrawal, ‘Decoding Trump’s Foreign-Policy Plans,’ *Foreign Policy* (July 30, 2024) - [https://foreignpolicy.com/live/elbridge-colby-trump-foreign-policy/#cookie\\_message\\_anchor](https://foreignpolicy.com/live/elbridge-colby-trump-foreign-policy/#cookie_message_anchor). During an interview with *Foreign Policy* magazine, Elbridge Colby, a former Pentagon official during Trump’s first term, was asked, ‘why is it so hard to define a Trump doctrine?’ The interviewer, Agrawal, quoted Robert O’Brien, Trump’s national security adviser, who said Trump adheres not to dogma, but his instincts. Thus, making Trump’s foreign policy potentially transactional and unpredictable. Colby replied saying that, ‘I think most of

Moreover, the thesis has shed new light on the ways in which doctrines facilitate and undermine the legitimation of presidential policy choices. By revealing the significance of repudiation, the study uncovers the reactive nature inherent in the discourse surrounding doctrines because to rationalize a shift in policy, which scholars have recognized doctrines do, they must also represent a rejection – to varying degrees – of what has gone before which this study has fleshed out. Whether all the presidents under study endorsed their doctrine by name or not, what often transpired through the discourse surrounding each of them was a recognition by a third-party actor in the press or legislature, or a declaration by the administration itself, that certain principles and policy practices in American foreign policy were no longer suitable for the moment at hand. Thus, the multitude of definitions of the various doctrines under study, propagated throughout the respective presidencies, often incorporated what they seemed to repudiate going forward.

Conversely, the importance of highlighting inconsistencies in policy execution and/or suggesting it was being based upon fallible assumptions were critical themes to how the rhetorical use of doctrines undermined the legitimation of choices. Due to the susceptibility of presidential doctrines to be scrutinized for being inconsistently executed in practice, most administrations have resisted endorsing them so as to not get straitjacketed by becoming associated with a specific set of responses for specific circumstances. Therefore, the thesis can serve as a benchmark for future historians and American foreign policy scholars to develop their conceptual frameworks when analyzing the political impact of presidential doctrines – however a scholar conceptualizes it. In sum, this thesis urges scholars to reconsider the debates surrounding presidential doctrines in their historical contexts to discern how contemporary actors thought about the leadership of their case-study.

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these doctrines are artificial. But I think there is a general theme that I can ascertain in President Trump's approach.' That theme, according to Colby, was defined by common sense and what was in America's interest.

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Interview with Bill Kristol – January 16, 2023

*Biography: Bill Kristol is an American neoconservative writer. He founded and was the editor-at-large of the political magazine The Weekly Standard, he served as Vice President Dan Quayle's chief of staff from 1989 to 1993 and has written an extensive number of publications on American foreign policy. In 1997, he co-founded the Project for the New American Century with Robert Kagan.*

Written response from Peter Feaver – February 8, 2023

*Biography: Peter Feaver is an American professor of political science and public policy at Duke University and a civil-military relations scholars. He served as Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control under Bill Clinton from 1993 to 1994 and as Special Adviser for Strategic Planning and Institutional Reform under George W. Bush from 2005 to 2007.*

Written response from Philip Zelikow – February 9, 2023

*Biography: Philip Zelikow is an American diplomat and international relations scholar. He served on the secretarial staff for Secretary of State George Shultz during the second Reagan administration (1985 to 1989); in the administration of George H.W. Bush, he served as a senior White House staffer in the diplomacy surrounding German reunification. In September 2002, he authored the National Security Strategy of the United States of America and in January 2003, he was appointed executive director of the 9/11 Commission Report.*

Written response from Paul Stephan – February 27, 2023

*Biography: Paul Stephan is an expert of international business, international dispute resolution, and comparative law with an emphasis on Soviet and post-Soviet legal systems. Stephan has advised government and international organizations. From 2006 to 2007, he served as counsellor on international law in the U.S. Department of State, and in 2020-2021 as a special counsel to the general counsel in the Department of Defense.*

Interview with Richard Clarke – March 2, 2023

*Biography: Richard Clarke is an American national security expert. He began his career as a management intern in the Department of Defense and in 1985, was appointed by Ronald Reagan as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence. He also served as the 10<sup>th</sup> Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs from 1981 to 1992 under George H.W. Bush. Bill Clinton appointed him as National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism which was a position he held between 1998 and 2003.*

Interview with William Antholis – March 7, 2023

*Biography: William Antholis is the director and CEO of the Miller Center of Public Affairs. Prior to this, Antholis served as the managing director of the Brookings Institution. From 1995 to 1999, Antholis served on the White House National Security Council and National Economic Council as well as the State Department.*

Interview with Kenneth Adelman – March 13, 2023

*Biography: Kenneth Adelman is an American diplomat, political writer, and policy analyst. Under Ronald Reagan, he was the Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and from 1983 to 1987 he was the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency advising President Reagan during superpower summits with Mikhail Gorbachev.*

Interview with David Demarest – June 28, 2023

*Biography: David Demarest served in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative where he was Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Public, Intergovernmental, and Private Sector Affairs under Reagan. In 1988, he was the communications director on the Bush-Quayle presidential campaign and then served four years from 1989 to 1993 as the White House Communications Director.*

Interview with Philip Taubman – July 11, 2023

*Biography: Philip Taubman is a lecturer at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. Taubman has worked at the New York Times as a reporter and editor for nearly 30 years, specialising in national security issues, U.S. diplomacy, and intelligence and defense policy and operations. He served as the Moscow bureau chief and Washington bureau chief, among other posts.*

Interview with Mark Gearan – August 17, 2023

*Biography: Mark Gearan is an American lawyer and the president of the Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. He previously served as the director at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics from 1995 to 1999. He also served as White House Communications Director under Bill Clinton from June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1993, till August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1995. Prior to this, he briefly served as White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy from January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1993, till June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1993.*

Interview with Greg Myre – October 3, 2023

*Biography: Greg Myre is an American journalist and an NPR national security correspondent with a focus on the intelligence community. Prior to his, he was a foreign correspondent for the Associated Press and The New York Times for 20 years. He has reported from more than 50 countries and covered many conflicts.*

Interview with E.J. Dionne – November 20, 2023

*Biography: E.J. Dionne is an American journalist, political commentator, and op-ed columnist for The Washington Post. He is a senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution, a professor in the Foundations of Democracy and Culture at the*

*McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, and an NPR, MSNBC, and PBS commentator.*

Interview with Henry Nau – November 27, 2023

*Biography: Henry Nau is a professor of political science and international affairs at the Elliot School of International Affairs at George Washington University. From 1975 to 1977, he was special assistant to the undersecretary for economic affairs in the U.S. Department of State. From January 1981 to July 1983 in Reagan's administration, he worked on international economic affairs as a senior staff member of the National Security Council.*

Interview with Robert Kaufman – January 25, 2024

*Biography: Robert G. Kaufman is a political scientist specializing in American foreign policy, national security, international relations, and various aspects of American politics. Kaufman has written frequently for scholarly journals and popular publications, including The Weekly Standard, Policy Review, The Washington Times, the Baltimore Sun, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, the Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times.*

Interview with Chase Untermeyer – February 1, 2024

*Biography: Chase Untermeyer is a former United States Ambassador to Qatar, serving under George W. Bush from December 2004 to August 2007. He was also a friend of former President George H.W. Bush under whom he served as Director of the White House Presidential Personnel Office from 1989 to 1991. Under Ronald Reagan, he served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs from December 1984 to April 1988.*

Interview with Joshua Muravchik – February 12, 2024

*Biography: Joshua Muravchik is a neoconservative scholar. He served on the board of trustees and the executive committee of Freedom House and in 1995, he became a founding member of the Foundation for Democracy in Iran. He has written opinion pieces in numerous national publications including The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and Commentary. He also served as a speechwriter during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign.*

Written response from Kori Schake – July 9, 2024

*Biography: Kori Schake is an American international relations scholar, currently serving as the Director of Foreign and Defense Policy at the American Enterprise Institute. She has held several high positions in the Defense and State Departments and on the National Security Council. She was also a foreign-policy adviser to the McCain-Palin 2008 presidential campaign. Schake is a contributing writer at The Atlantic. She serves on the board of advisers of the Foreign Policy Research Institute and the Alexander Hamilton Society.*

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