

THE NEXT WORLD ORDER

The Bush Administration may have a brand-new doctrine of power.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

When there is a change of command—and not just in government—the new people often persuade themselves that the old people were much worse than anyone suspected. This feeling seems especially intense in the Bush Administration, perhaps because Bill Clinton has been bracketed by a father-son team. It's easy for people in the Administration to believe that, after an unfortunate eight-year interlude, the Bush family has resumed its governance—and about time, too.

The Bush Administration's sense that the Clinton years were a waste, or worse, is strongest in the realms of foreign policy and military affairs. Republicans tend to regard Democrats as untrustworthy in defense and foreign policy, anyway, in ways that coincide with what people think of as Clinton's weak points: an eagerness to please, a lack of discipline. Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national-security adviser, wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* two years ago in which she contemptuously accused Clinton of "an extraordinary neglect of the fiduciary responsibilities of the commander in chief." Most of the top figures in foreign affairs in this Administration also served under the President's father. They took office last year, after what they regard as eight years of small-time flyswatting by Clinton, thinking that they were picking up where they'd left off.

Not long ago, I had lunch with—sorry!—a senior Administration foreign-policy official, at a restaurant in Washington called the Oval Room. Early in the lunch, he handed me a twenty-seven-page report, whose cover bore the seal of the Department of Defense, an outline map of the world, and these words:

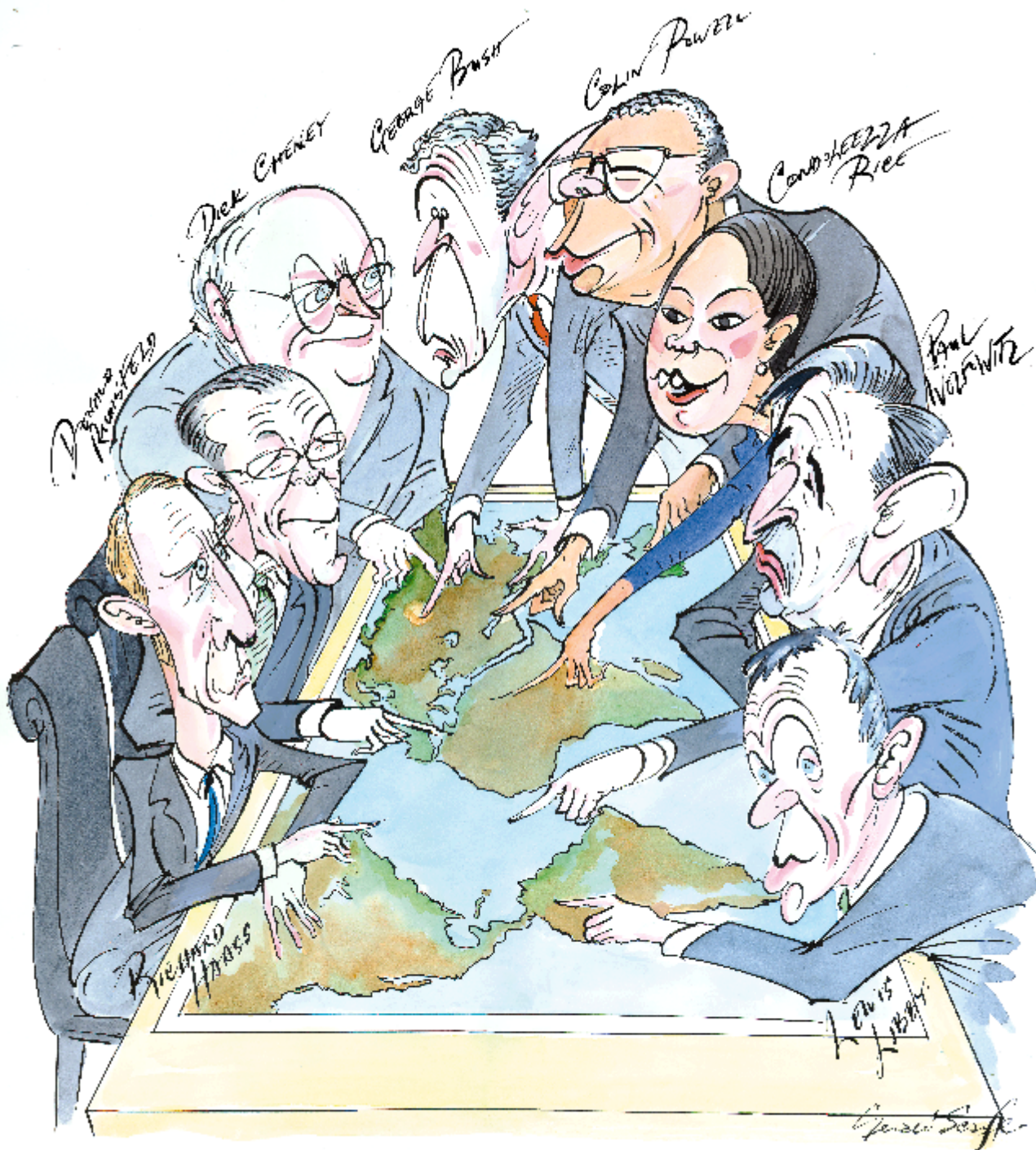
Defense Strategy for the 1990s:
The Regional Defense Strategy
Secretary of Defense
Dick Cheney
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One of the difficulties of working at the highest level of government is com-

municating its drama. Actors, professional athletes, and even elected politicians train for years, go through a great winnowing, and then perform publicly. People who have titles like Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense are just as ambitious and competitive, have worked just as long and hard, and are often playing for even higher stakes—but what they do all day is go to meetings and write memos and prepare briefings. How, possibly, to explain that some of the documents, including the report that the senior official handed me, which was physically indistinguishable from a high-school term paper, represent the government version of playing Carnegie Hall?

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Dick Cheney, then the Secretary of Defense, set up a "shop," as they say, to think about American foreign policy after the Cold War, at the grand strategic level. The project, whose existence was kept quiet, included people who are now back in the game, at a higher level: among them, Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff; and Eric Edelman, a senior foreign-policy adviser to Cheney—generally speaking, a cohesive group of conservatives who regard themselves as bigger-thinking, tougher-minded, and intellectually bolder than most other people in Washington. (Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, shares these characteristics, and has been closely associated with Cheney for more than thirty years.) Colin Powell, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, mounted a competing, and presumably more ideologically moderate, effort to reimagine American foreign policy and defense. A date was set—May 21, 1990—on which each team would brief Cheney for an hour; Cheney would then brief President Bush, after which Bush would make a foreign-policy address unveiling the new grand strategy.

Everybody worked for months on the "five-twenty-one brief," with a sense that



One former Pentagon official says that the Administration's conservatives are "relentless" and that "resistance is futile."

the shape of the post-Cold War world was at stake. When Wolfowitz and Powell arrived at Cheney's office on May 21st, Wolfowitz went first, but his briefing lasted far beyond the allotted hour, and Cheney (a hawk who, perhaps, liked what he was hearing) did not call time on him. Powell didn't get to present his alternate version of the future of the United States in the world until a couple of weeks later. Cheney briefed President Bush, using material mostly from Wolfowitz, and Bush prepared his major foreign-policy address. But he

delivered it on August 2, 1990, the day that Iraq invaded Kuwait, so nobody noticed. The team kept working. In 1992, the *Times* got its hands on a version of the material, and published a front-page story saying that the Pentagon envisioned a future in which the United States could, and should, prevent any other nation or alliance from becoming a great power. A few weeks of controversy ensued about the Bush Administration's hawks being "unilateral"—controversy that Cheney's people put an end to with

denials and the counter-leak of an edited, softer version of the same material. As it became apparent that Bush was going to lose to Clinton, the Cheney team's efforts took on the quality of a parting shot. The report that the senior official handed me at lunch had been issued only a few days before Clinton took office. It is a somewhat bland, opaque document—a "scrubbed," meaning unclassified, version of something more candid—but it contained the essential ideas of "shaping," rather than reacting

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to, the rest of the world, and of preventing the rise of other superpowers. Its tone is one of skepticism about diplomatic partnerships. A more forthright version of the same ideas can be found in a short book titled "From Containment to Global Leadership?," which Zalmay Khalilzad, who joined Cheney's team in 1991 and is now special envoy to Afghanistan, published a couple of years into the Clinton Administration, when he was out of government. It recommends that the United States "preclude the rise of another global rival for the indefinite future." Khalilzad writes, "It is a vital U.S. interest to preclude such a development—i.e., to be willing to use force if necessary for the purpose."

When George W. Bush was campaigning for President, he and the people around him didn't seem to be proposing a great doctrinal shift, along the lines of the policy of containment of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence which the United States maintained during the Cold War. In his first major foreign-policy speech, delivered in November of 1999, Bush declared that "a President must be a clear-eyed realist," a formulation that seems to connote an absence of world-remaking ambition. "Realism" is exactly the foreign-policy doctrine that Cheney's Pentagon team rejected, partly because it posits the impossibility of any one country's ever dominating world affairs for any length of time.

One gets many reminders in Washington these days of how much the terrorist attacks of September 11th have changed official foreign-policy thinking. Any chief executive, of either party, would probably have done what Bush has done so far—made war on the Taliban and Al Qaeda and enhanced domestic security. It is only now, six months after the attacks, that we are truly entering the realm of Presidential choice, and all indications are that Bush is going to use September 11th as the occasion to launch a new, aggressive American foreign policy that would represent a broad change in direction rather than a specific war on terrorism. All his rhetoric, especially in the two addresses he has given to joint sessions of Congress since September 11th, and all the information about his state of mind which his aides

have leaked, indicate that he sees this as the nation's moment of destiny—a perception that the people around him seem to be encouraging, because it enhances Bush's stature and opens the way to more assertive policymaking.

Inside government, the reason September 11th appears to have been "a transformative moment," as the senior official I had lunch with put it, is not so much that it revealed the existence of a threat of which officials had previously been unaware as that it drastically reduced the American public's usual resistance to American military involvement overseas, at least for a while. The Clinton Administration, beginning with the "Black Hawk Down" operation in Mogadishu, during its first year, operated on the conviction that Americans were highly averse to casualties; the all-bombing Kosovo operation, in Clinton's next-to-last year, was the ideal foreign military adventure. Now that the United States has been attacked, the options are much broader. The senior official approvingly mentioned a 1999 study of casualty aversion by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies, which argued that the "mass public" is much less casualty-averse than the military or the civilian elite believes; for example, the study showed that the public would tolerate thirty thousand deaths in a military operation to prevent Iraq from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. (The American death total in the Vietnam War was about fifty-eight thousand.) September 11th presumably reduced casualty aversion even further.

Recently, I went to the White House to interview Condoleezza Rice. Rice's *Foreign Affairs* article from 2000 begins with this declaration: "The United States has found it exceedingly difficult to define its 'national interest' in the absence of Soviet power." I asked her whether that is still the case. "I think the difficulty has passed in defining a role," she said immediately. "I think September 11th was one of those great earthquakes that clarify and sharpen. Events are in much sharper relief." Like Bush, she said that opposing terrorism and preventing the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction "in the hands of irresponsible states" now define the national interest. (The latter goal,

by the way, is new—in Bush's speech to Congress on September 20th, America's sole grand purpose was ending terrorism.) We talked in her West Wing office; its tall windows face the part of the White House grounds where television reporters do their standups. In her bearing, Rice seemed less crisply military than she does in public. She looked a little tired, but she was projecting a kind of missionary calm, rather than belligerence.

In the *Foreign Affairs* article, Rice came across as a classic realist, putting forth "the notions of power politics, great powers, and power balances" as the proper central concerns of the United States. Now she sounded as if she had moved closer to the one-power idea that Cheney's Pentagon team proposed ten years ago—or, at least, to the idea that the other great powers are now in harmony with the United States, because of the terrorist attacks, and can be induced to remain so. "Theoretically, the realists would predict that when you have a great power like the United States it would not be long before you had other great powers rising to challenge it or trying to balance against it," Rice said. "And I think what you're seeing is that there's at least a predilection this time to move to productive and cooperative relations with the United States, rather than to try to balance the United States. I actually think that statecraft matters in how it all comes out. It's not all foreordained."

Rice said that she had called together the senior staff people of the National Security Council and asked them to think seriously about "how do you capitalize on these opportunities" to fundamentally change American doctrine, and the shape of the world, in the wake of September 11th. "I really think this period is analogous to 1945 to 1947," she said—that is, the period when the containment doctrine took shape—"in that the events so clearly demonstrated that there is a big global threat, and that it's a big global threat to a lot of countries that you would not have normally thought of as being in the coalition. That has started shifting the tectonic plates in international politics. And it's important to try to seize on that and position American interests and institutions and all of that before they harden again."

The National Security Council is

legally required to produce an annual document called the National Security Strategy, stating the over-all goals of American policy—another government report whose importance is great but not obvious. The Bush Administration did not produce one last year, as the Clinton Administration did not in its first year. Rice said that she is working on the report now.

“There are two ways to handle this document,” she told me. “One is to do it in a kind of minimalist way and just get it out. But it’s our view that, since this is going to be the first one for the Bush Administration, it’s important. An awful lot has happened since we started this process, prior to 9/11. I can’t give you a certain date when it’s going to be out, but I would think sometime this spring. And it’s important that it be a real statement of what the Bush Administration sees as the strategic direction that it’s going.”

It seems clear already that Rice will set forth the hope of a more dominant American role in the world than she might have a couple of years ago. Some questions that don’t appear to be settled yet, but are obviously being asked, are how much the United States is willing to operate alone in foreign affairs, and how much change it is willing to try to engender inside other countries—and to what end, and with what means. The leak a couple of weeks ago of a new American nuclear posture, adding offensive capability against “rogue states,” departed from decades of official adherence to a purely defensive position, and was just one indication of the scope of the reconsideration that is going on. Is the United States now in a position to be redrawing regional maps, especially in the Middle East, and replacing governments by force? Nobody thought that the Bush Administration would be thinking in such ambitious terms, but plainly it is, and with the internal debate to the right of where it was only a few months ago.

Just before the 2000 election, a Republican foreign-policy figure suggested to me that a good indication of a Bush Administration’s direction in foreign affairs would be who got a higher-ranking job, Paul Wolfowitz or Richard Haass. Haass is another veteran of the first Bush Administration, and an intellec-

tual like Wolfowitz, but much more moderate. In 1997, he published a book titled “The Reluctant Sheriff,” in which he poked a little fun at Wolfowitz’s famous strategy briefing of the early nineties (he called it the “Pentagon Paper”) and disagreed with its idea that the United States should try to be the world’s only great power over the long term. “For better or worse, such a goal is beyond our reach,” Haass wrote. “It simply is not doable.” Elsewhere in the book, he disagreed with another of the Wolfowitz team’s main ideas, that of the United States expanding the “democratic zone of peace”: “Primacy is not to be confused with hegemony. The United States cannot compel others to become more democratic.” Haass argued that the United States is becoming less dominant in the world, not more, and suggested “a revival of what might be called traditional great-power politics.”

Wolfowitz got a higher-ranking job than Haass: he is Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Haass is Director of Policy Planning for the State Department—in effect, Colin Powell’s big-think guy. Recently, I went to see him in his office at the State Department. On the wall of his waiting room was an array of photographs of every past director of the policy-planning staff, beginning with

George Kennan, the father of the containment doctrine and the first holder of the office that Haass now occupies.

It’s another indication of the way things are moving in Washington that Haass seems to have become more hawkish. I mentioned the title of his book. “Using the word ‘reluctant’ was itself reflective of a period when foreign policy seemed secondary, and sacrificing for foreign policy was a hard case to make,” he said. “It was written when Bill Clinton was saying, ‘It’s the economy, stupid!’—not ‘It’s the world, stupid.’ Two things are very different now. One, the President has a much easier time making the case that foreign policy matters. Second, at the top of the national-security charts is this notion of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.”

I asked Haass whether there is a doctrine emerging that is as broad as Kennan’s containment. “I think there is,” he said. “What you’re seeing from this Administration is the emergence of a new principle or body of ideas—I’m not sure it constitutes a doctrine—about what you might call the limits of sovereignty. Sovereignty entails obligations. One is not to massacre your own people. Another is not to support terrorism in any way. If a government fails to meet these obligations, then it forfeits some of the



“He’s in the field today.”

normal advantages of sovereignty, including the right to be left alone inside your own territory. Other governments, including the United States, gain the right to intervene. In the case of terrorism, this can even lead to a right of preventive, or preemptory, self-defense. You essentially can act in anticipation if you have grounds to think it's a question of when, and not if, you're going to be attacked."

Clearly, Haass was thinking of Iraq. "I don't think the American public needs a lot of persuading about the evil that is Saddam Hussein," he said. "Also, I'd fully expect the President and his chief lieutenants to make the case. Public opinion can be changed. We'd be able to make the case that this isn't a discretionary action but one done in self-defense."

On the larger issue of the American role in the world, Haass was still maintaining some distance from the hawks. He had made a speech not long before called "Imperial America," but he told me that there is a big difference between imperial and imperialist. "I just think that we have to be a little bit careful," he said. "Great as our advantages are, there are still limits. We have to have allies. We can't impose our ideas on everyone. We don't want to be fighting wars alone, so we need others to join us. American leadership, yes; but not American unilateralism. It has to be multilateral. We can't win the war against terror alone. We can't send forces everywhere. It really does have to be a collaborative endeavor."

He stopped for a moment. "Is there a successor idea to containment? I think there is," he said. "It is the idea of integration. The goal of U.S. foreign policy should be to persuade the other major powers to sign on to certain key ideas as to how the world should operate: opposition to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, support for free trade, democracy, markets. Integration is about locking them into these policies and then building institutions that lock them in even more."

The first, but by no means the last, obvious manifestation of a new American foreign policy will be the effort to remove Saddam Hussein. What the United States does in an Iraq operation will very likely dwarf what's been done so far in Afghanistan, both in terms of the scale of the operation itself and in terms of its aftermath.

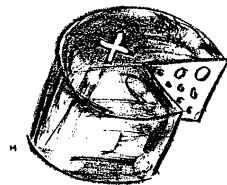
Several weeks ago, Ahmad Chalabi, the head of the Iraqi National Congress, the Iraqi opposition party, came through Washington with an entourage of his aides. Chalabi went to the State Department and the White House to ask, evidently successfully, for more American funding. His main public event was a panel discussion at the American Enterprise Institute. Chalabi's leading supporter in town, Richard Perle, the prominent hawk and former Defense Department official, acted as moderator. Smiling and supremely confident, Perle opened the discussion by saying, "Evidence is mounting that the Administration is looking very carefully at strategies for dealing with Saddam Hussein." The war on terrorism, he said, will not be complete "until Saddam is successfully dealt with. And that means replacing his regime. . . . That action will be taken, I have no doubt."

Chalabi, who lives in London, is a charming, suave middle-aged man with a twinkle in his eye. He was dressed in a double-breasted pin-striped suit and a striped shirt with a white spread collar. Although he and his supporters argue that the Iraqi National Congress, with sufficient American support, can defeat Saddam just as the Northern Alliance defeated the Taliban in Afghanistan, this view hasn't won over most people in Washington. It isn't just that Chalabi doesn't look the part of a rebel military leader ("He could fight you for the last petit four on the tray over tea at the Savoy, but that's about it," one skeptical former Pentagon official told me), or that he isn't in Iraq. It's also that Saddam's military is perhaps ten times the size that the Taliban's was, and has been quite successful at putting down revolts over the last decade. The United States left Iraq in 1991 believing that Saddam might soon fall to an internal rebellion; Chalabi's supporters believe that Saddam is much weaker now, and that even signs that a serious operation was in the offing could finish him off. But non-true believers seem to be coming around to

the idea that a military operation against Saddam would mean the deployment of anywhere from a hundred thousand to three hundred thousand American ground troops.

Kenneth Pollack, a former C.I.A. analyst who was the National Security Council's staff expert on Iraq during the last years of the Clinton Administration, recently caused a stir in the foreign-policy world by publishing an article in *Foreign Affairs* calling for war against Saddam. This was noteworthy because three years ago Pollack and two co-authors published an article, also in *Foreign Affairs*, arguing that the Iraqi National Congress was incapable of defeating Saddam. Pollack still doesn't think Chalabi can do the job. He believes that it would require a substantial American ground, air, and sea force, closer in size to the one we used in Kuwait in 1990-91 than to the one we are using now in Afghanistan.

Pollack, who is trim, quick, and crisp, is obviously a man who has given a briefing or two in his day. When I went to see him at his office in Washington, with a little encouragement he got out from behind his desk and walked over to his office wall, where three maps of the Middle East were hanging. "The only way to do it is a full-scale invasion," he said, using a pen as a pointer. "We're talking about two grand corps, two to three hundred thousand people altogether. The population is here, in the Tigris-Euphrates valley." He pointed to the area between Baghdad and Basra. "Ideally, you'd have the Saudis on board." He pointed to the Prince Sultan airbase, near Riyadh. "You could make Kuwait the base, but it's much easier in Saudi. You need to take western Iraq and southern Iraq"—pointing again—"because otherwise they'll fire Scuds at Israel and at the Saudi oil fields. You probably want to prevent Iraq from blowing up its own oil fields, so troops have to occupy them. And you need troops to defend the Kurds in northern Iraq." Point, point. "You go in as hard as you can, as fast as you can." He slapped his hand on the top of his desk. "You get the enemy to divide his forces, by threatening him in two places at once." His hand hit the desk again, hard. "Then you crush him." Smack.



That would be a reverberating blow. The United States has already removed the government of one country, Afghanistan, the new government is obviously shaky, and American military operations there are not completed. Pakistan, which before September 11th clearly met the new test of national unacceptability (it both harbors terrorists and has weapons of mass destruction), will also require long-term attention, since the country is not wholly under the control of the government, as the murder of Daniel Pearl demonstrated, and even parts of the government, like the intelligence service, may not be entirely under the control of the President. In Iraq, if America invades and brings down Saddam, a new government must be established—an enormous long-term task in a country where there is no obvious, plausible new leader. The prospective Iraq operation has drawn strong objections from the neighboring nations, one of which, Russia, is a nuclear superpower. An invasion would have a huge effect on the internal affairs of all the biggest Middle Eastern nations: Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and even Egypt. Events have forced the Administration to become directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it hadn't wanted to do. So it's really the entire region that is in play, in much the way that Europe was immediately after the Second World War.

In September, Bush rejected Paul Wolfowitz's recommendation of immediate moves against Iraq. That the President seems to have changed his mind is an indication, in part, of the bureaucratic skill of the Administration's conservatives. "These guys are relentless," one former official, who is close to the high command at the State Department, told me. "Resistance is futile." The conservatives' other weapon, besides relentlessness, is intellectualism. Colin Powell tends to think case by case, and since September 11th the conservatives have outflanked him by producing at least the beginning of a coherent, hawkish world view whose acceptance practically requires invading Iraq. If the United States applies the doctrines of Cheney's old Pentagon team, "shaping" and expanding "the zone of democracy," the implications would extend far beyond that one operation.

The outside experts on the Middle East who have the most credibility with the Administration seem to be Bernard Lewis, of Princeton, and Fouad Ajami, of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, both of whom see the Arab Middle East as a region in need of radical remediation. Lewis was invited to the White House in December to brief the senior foreign-policy staff. "One point he made is, Look, in that part of the world, nothing matters more than resolute will and force," the senior official I had lunch with told me—in other words, the United States needn't proceed gingerly for fear of inflaming the "Arab street," as long as it is prepared to be strong. The senior official also recommended as interesting thinkers on the Middle East Charles Hill, of Yale, who in a recent essay declared, "Every regime of the Arab-Islamic world has proved a failure," and Reuel Marc Gerecht, of the American Enterprise Institute, who published an article in *The Weekly Standard* about the need for a change of regime in Iran and Syria. (Those goals, Gerecht told me when we spoke, could be accomplished through pressure short of an invasion.)

Several people I spoke with predicted that most, or even all, of the nations that loudly oppose an invasion of Iraq would privately cheer it on, if they felt certain that this time the Americans were really going to finish the job. One purpose of Vice-President Cheney's recent diplomatic tour of the region was to offer assurances on that matter, while gamely absorbing all the public criticism of an Iraq operation. In any event, the Administration appears to be committed to acting forcefully in advance of the world's approval. When I spoke to Condoleezza Rice, she said that the United States should assemble "coalitions of the willing" to support its actions, rather than feel it has to work within the existing infrastructure of international treaties and organizations. An invasion of Iraq would test that policy in more ways than one: the Administration would be betting that it can continue to eliminate Al Qaeda cells in countries that publicly opposed the Iraq operation.

When the Administration submitted its budget earlier this year, it asked

for a forty-eight-billion-dollar increase in defense spending for fiscal 2003, which begins in October, 2002. Much of that sum would go to improve military pay and benefits, but ten billion dollars of it is designated as an unspecified contingency fund for further operations in the war on terrorism. That's probably at least the initial funding for an invasion of Iraq.

This spring, the Administration will be talking to other countries about the invasion, trying to secure basing and overflight privileges, while Bush builds up a rhetorical case for it by giving speeches about the unacceptability of developing weapons of mass destruction. A drama involving weapons inspections in Iraq will play itself out over the spring and summer, and will end with the United States declaring that the terms that Saddam offers for the inspections, involving delays and restrictions, are unacceptable. Then, probably in the late summer or early fall, the enormous troop positioning, which will take months, will begin. The Administration obviously feels confident that the United States can effectively parry whatever aggressive actions Saddam takes during the troop buildup, and hopes that its moves will destabilize Iraq enough to cause the Republican Guard, the military key to the country, to turn against Saddam and topple him on its own. But the chain of events leading inexorably to a full-scale American invasion, if it hasn't already begun, evidently will begin soon.

Lewis (Scooter) Libby, who was the principal drafter of Cheney's future-of-the-world documents during the first Bush Administration, now works in an office in the Old Executive Office Building, overlooking the West Wing, where he has a second, smaller office. A packet of public-relations material prompted by the recent paperback publication of his 1996 novel, "The Apprentice," quotes the *Times*' calling him "Dick Cheney's Dick Cheney," which seems like an apt description: he appears absolutely sure of himself, and, whether by coincidence or as a result of the influence of his boss, speaks in a tough, confidential, gravelly rumble. Like Condoleezza Rice and Bush himself, he gives the impression of having calmly accepted the idea that the project of war

and reconstruction which the Administration has now taken on may be a little exhausting for those charged with carrying it out but is unquestionably right, the only truly prudent course.

When I went to see Libby, not long ago, I asked him whether, before September 11th, American policy toward terrorism should have been different. He went to his desk and got out a large black loose-leaf binder, filled with typewritten sheets interspersed with foldout maps of the Middle East. He looked through it for a long minute, formulating his answer.

"Let us stack it up," he said at last. "Somalia, 1993; 1994, the discovery of the Al Qaeda-related plot in the Philippines; 1993, the World Trade Center, first bombing; 1993, the attempt to assassinate President Bush, former President Bush, and the lack of response to that; 1995, the Riyadh bombing; 1996, the Khobar bombing; 1998, the Kenyan embassy bombing and the Tanzanian embassy bombing; 1999, the plot to launch millennium attacks; 2000, the bombing of the Cole. Throughout this period, infractions on inspections by the Iraqis, and eventually the withdrawal of the entire inspection regime; and the failure to respond significantly to Iraqi incursions in the Kurdish areas. No one would say these challenges posed easy problems, but if you take that long list and you ask, 'Did we respond in a way which discouraged people from supporting terrorist activities, or activities clearly against our interests? Did we help to shape the environment in a way which discouraged further aggressions against U.S. interests?,' many observers conclude no, and ask whether it was then easier for someone like Osama bin Laden to rise up and say credibly, 'The Americans don't have the stomach to defend themselves. They won't take casualties to defend their interests. They are morally weak.'"

Libby insisted that the American response to September 11th has not been standard or foreordained. "Look at what the President has done in Afghanistan," he said, "and look at his speech to the joint session of Congress"—meaning the State of the Union Message, in January. "He made it clear that it's an important area. He made it clear that we

believe in expanding the zone of democracy even in this difficult part of the world. He made it clear that we stand by our friends and defend our interests. And he had the courage to identify those states which present a problem, and to begin to build consensus for action that would need to be taken if there is not a change of behavior on their part. Take the Afghan case, for example. There are many other courses that the President could have taken. He could have waited for juridical proof before we responded. He could have engaged in long negotiations with the Taliban. He could have failed to seek a new relationship with Pakistan, based on its past nuclear tests, or been so afraid of weakening Pakistan that we didn't seek its help. This list could go on to twice or three times the length I've mentioned so far. But, instead, the President saw an opportunity to refashion relations while standing up for our interests. The problem is complex, and we don't know yet how it will end, but we have opened new prospects for relations not only with Afghanistan, as important as it was as a threat, but with the states of Central Asia, Pakistan, Russia, and, as it may develop, with the states of Southwest Asia more generally."

We moved on to Iraq, and the question of what makes Saddam Hussein unacceptable, in the Administration's eyes. "The issue is not inspections," Libby said. "The issue is the Iraqis' promise not to have weapons of mass destruction, their promise to recognize the boundaries of Kuwait, their promise not to threaten other countries, and other promises that they made in '91, and a number of U.N. resolutions, including all the other problems I listed. Whether it was wise or not—and that is the subject of debate—Iraq was given a second chance to abide by international norms. It failed to take that chance then, and annually for the next ten years."

"What's your level of confidence," I asked him, "that the current regime will, in fact, change its behavior in a way that you will be satisfied by?"

He ran his hand over his face and then gave me a direct gaze and spoke slowly and deliberately. "There is no basis in Iraq's past behavior to have confidence in good-faith efforts on their part to change their behavior." ♦