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Nguyen Manh Hung

Department of Public and International Affairs
George Mason University

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The Bush Doctrine—A Minority View*

By
Nguyen Manh Hung

***Abstract:** Textbook writers and political pundits overwhelmingly consider the strategy of preemption stated in the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States as the Bush doctrine. This paper will survey various interpretations of the Bush doctrine arguing that presidential doctrines tend to deal with major goals, not means, of United States foreign policy. Indeed, pre-emption is nothing more than a means to achieve the goal of protecting the US against terrorist attacks similar to John Foster Dulles' "massive retaliation" strategy or Kennedy's counter-insurgency strategy to stop Soviet expansionism in the context of a policy of containment. As a consequence, the Bush doctrine should be based on the President's speech to Congress nine days after the September 11, 2001 attack, in which he divided the world into two camps, those who side with the United States and those who side with the terrorists, and declared a global war against transnational terrorists. To the Bush administration, international terrorism was perceived as a major threat to the United States and the "civilized" world in the post-Cold War era, just as Soviet expansionism was perceived as a major threat to the United States and the free world during the Cold War era.*

PRESIDENTIAL DOCTRINE AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

In the unique American political system, the President, the only official elected nationally, is seen as the spokesperson for all of the United States both at home and abroad. His enunciations on foreign policy are regarded as American foreign policies that require other countries to take them into consideration when interacting with the United States. At certain important junctures of history, presented by an external challenge, the president may make a foreign policy statement that defines his presidency and his time.

This statement is regarded as a presidential doctrine. Such a doctrine represents the overarching principle of American foreign policy, which guides the selection of all other policies, actions, and measures to implement that principle.

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil, President George W. Bush has made a number of statements justifying his "global war against terror." Such statements include "you are with us or with the terrorists"; the threat of preemptive attack; the need to maintain a military "beyond challenge" and a balance of power that favors freedom; and the goal of defeating terrorists and "ending tyranny in this world." These statements either singly or collectively represent Bush's way of dealing with what he saw as a global threat. They are regarded as the Bush doctrine, the novelty and perceived boldness or aggressiveness of which have caused deep concerns and intense debates among theoreticians and practitioners both at home and abroad about its

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meanings, its legality, and its implications in the context of American primacy and a globalized world. Mary Buckley and Robert Singh wrote about the global responses and global consequences of the Bush doctrine (2005), Melvin Gurtov and Peter Van Ness discussed its implications for, and reactions from Asia (2005), Gary Prevost and Carlos Oliva Campos looked at it from a Latin American angle (2007), and Justin Vaisse examined the impact of the Bush doctrine on transatlantic relations (2006).

Commenting on the Bush doctrine, some like Mel Gurtov and Nicholas J. Wheeler consider it a “dangerous doctrine, one that will undermine rather than strengthen American national security” (2005:1 and 181). Others, like Amitav Achaya, complain that the Bush doctrine has shown “a clear pattern of disregard for multilateralism” and has caused “reservations and misgivings” from Asia (Ibid:206-207). Moreover, Sanjay Gupta criticizes the doctrine as “not being in conformity with international law, customary law, and UN Security Council resolutions” and that it may have an imitation effect “encouraging other states ... to take unilateral action against their adversaries” (Gupta, 2008:181-196).

Unlike previous presidential doctrines, such as the Truman doctrine, the Nixon doctrine, or the Reagan doctrine, the problem is that there is still no clear agreement on a single definition of the Bush doctrine, and the debate about its meaning and consequences have not ended. It is, therefore, worthwhile to define the key concept of the Bush doctrine and situate it in the tradition of American foreign policy since the end of World War II when the United States began to divorce itself from isolationism and embraced a global role in world affairs.

THE ELUSIVE BUSH DOCTRINE

Today, the Bush doctrine remains an elusive concept and its meaning hotly contested. Scholars and political pundits don't seem to be able to agree on a single definition of the Bush doctrine. In one book, separated by a few pages, associated with a single author, one can find two different interpretations of the Bush doctrine. In his chapter on “The Bush Doctrine,” Robert Singh describes the Bush doctrine as including four “key elements”, namely “preventive war, confronting the nexus of weapons of mass destruction and catastrophic terrorism, ‘regime change’ for ‘rogue states,’ and democracy promotion” (Buckley and Singh, 2005:13). Only nine pages earlier, in the “Introduction” Singh himself co-authors with Mary Buckley, the two authors come up with a slightly different set of “four pillars” of the doctrine: “the maintenance of American primacy; the embrace of preventive war as a supplement to traditional deterrence; the war on terrorism; and democratization” (Ibid:4).

The interview of vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin on ABC TV by Charlie Gibson on September 11, 2008 where Ms. Palin failed to give a concrete answer to a question on the “Bush doctrine” was immediately followed by a flurry of exchanges in the media about the true meaning of the Bush doctrine. Mr. Gibson, who was accused of being dismissive of Ms. Palin, seemed to believe that the Bush doctrine simply meant a

strategy of “anticipatory self-defense” or “pre-emptive strike.”¹ Others did not agree with him. Some claim that there are several distinct Bush doctrines, others maintain that there are several “meanings,” several “elements” or several “pillars,” of the Bush doctrine.

JOURNALISTIC SPARRING OVER THE DEFINITION OF THE BUSH DOCTRINE

Charles Krauthammer, who claimed to have first used the term, maintained, “there is no single meaning of the Bush doctrine. In fact, there have been four distinct meanings, each one succeeding another over the eight years of this administration.” He then listed: unilateralism, the “with us or against us” policy, a doctrine of preemptive war, and spreading democracy throughout the world. Krauthammer, however, insisted that if he were asked “today” he would say the freedom agenda represented the grand strategy of the Bush doctrine.

Michael Abramowitz upped the ante by quoting Peter D. Feaver, who worked on the Bush national security as a staff member on the National Security Council, saying there were “seven distinct Bush doctrines.” But Abramowitz named only four in his article: the freedom agenda; the notion that states that harbor terrorists should be treated no differently than terrorists themselves; the willingness to use a “coalition of the willing” if the United Nations does not address threats; and preemptive war (2008). Abramowitz also quoted Bush Press Secretary Dana Perino as saying the Bush doctrine included three elements, which were “The United States makes no distinction between those who commit acts of terror and those who support and harbor terrorists . . . We will confront grave threats before they fully materialize and will fight terrorists abroad so we don’t have to face them at home . . . We will counter the hateful ideology of the terrorist by promoting the hopeful alternative of human freedom.” She affirmed that the president “is comfortable with the way I . . . described it” (Ibid.)

Two other journalists opined that the Bush Doctrine was not about preemption, but prevention. Dan Froomkin began with a demurral. “I’m not sure anyone is entirely clear on what the Bush Doctrine is at this particular moment,” he wrote. But he eventually agreed with the Krauthammer’s idea of “several Bush Doctrines over the years.” Froomkin quoted the president’s declaration on September 20, 2001 and his speech on February 11, 2002 to prove that the Bush doctrines included the “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” policy and the agenda of “spreading freedom and ending tyranny in the world,” but insisted that the other Bush doctrine is “preventive war,” not preemptive attack (Fromkin, 2008). On this final note, he got the support of James Fallows who observed, “The more controversial part of the Bush Doctrine was the idea of preventive war: acting before the threat had fully emerged.” For Fallows, prevention was new, but the concept of preemptive action has been a long recognized of American foreign policy (2008).

¹ Nudging Sarah Palin, Gibson said, “The Bush doctrine, as I understand it, is that we have the right of anticipatory self-defense, that we have the right to a preemptive strike against any other country that we think is going to attack us.”

Thus, the majority of journalists and editorial writers, many of whom reacted instantly in defense of Sarah Palin's lack of understanding of an important doctrine of American foreign policy of the day, argued that there were many elements of the Bush doctrine, and the doctrine of preemption was only one of them. What about textbooks writers and academics who have the luxury of time to ponder and analyze the doctrine?

TEXTBOOK WRITERS AND ACADEMICS BATTLING OVER THE BUSH DOCTRINE

Textbook writers, such as Donald M. Snow, and Steven Hook and John Spanier drew their readings of the Bush doctrine from the *National Security Strategy of the United States* (NSS) document released in September 2002; they agreed on at least two elements of the Bush doctrine –unilateralism and preemption. To Snow, the Bush Doctrine consists of three elements: 1) the option of unilateral action; 2) preemptive action; and 3) overwhelming American force (2007:270). Hook and Spanier, both in their latest publication in 2010 and an earlier version of their book in 2004, zoomed in on two pillars –the virtue of American primacy and the nation's right to wage preemptive war against perceived threats (2010:286). This view was shared by Thomas Donnelly, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, when he analyzed at length two important concepts of American foreign policy under the Bush administration: the “logic of American primacy” and the “logic of preemption” (2003).

Also based on the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, Sanjay Gupta cited “a set of foreign policy guidelines” outlining a new phase in US foreign policy that included a greater emphasis on military pre-emption, military superiority, unilateral action, and a commitment to “extending democracy, liberty, and security to all regions.” His whole article, however, was devoted to one aspect of that new foreign policy line, the doctrine of pre-emptive strike (2008:182).

Five years earlier, Francois Heisbourg had picked out the “concept of preemptive and anticipatory action” not only from the 2002 NSS document, but also from the president's State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002 and his commencement address at West Point on June 1, 2002. In the State of the Union Address, the president stated, “We must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world.... I will not wait on events, while danger gathers.” At West Point five months later, he explained, “For much of the last century, American defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, these strategies still apply.... If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.... We must take the battle to the enemy...and confront the worst threats before they emerge” (2003:75-76).

PREEMPTION VERSUS PREVENTION

Other scholars disagreed. Robert Jervis, who wrote soon after the publication of the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, identified four elements of the Bush doctrine: 1) the recognition that this is the opportune time to transform international politics (transformational diplomacy); 2) the necessity of preventive war; 3) the

willingness to act unilaterally; and 4) American primacy (Jervis, 2003:365). Thus, Jervis thought Bush must have talked about preventive war, not preemptive war, despite the fact that the word prevention is nowhere to be seen in the *NSS* document.

Mackubin Thomas Owens also argues that the assertion of the right of the United States to undertake “preventive” war is one of the “principles” underlying the Bush doctrine, not the right of state to launch a “preemptive” strike which has always been recognized by international law and norms (2009:25).

Joining this chorus, Amitav Acharya maintained that “The Bush Doctrine is really about preventive war.” To him, preemptive war is defined as “an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent,” while a preventive war is defined as “a war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve great risk” (2003:205).

Abraham D. Sofaer agreed that preventive action is different from preemptive attack because it seeks to counter threats “before they are imminent,” but cautioned against overstating the difference between prevention and preemption. He explained that “Many contemporary threats do not involve conventional forces that can be observed as they prepare to attack; rather, they involve unconventional uses of force that remain invisible until their sudden deployment. Such unconventional use of force can seldom be preempted at their moment of imminence” (2010:111). Sofaer went on to cite cases where preventive uses of force are technically illegal, but considered legitimate (Ibid:112-144).

While it is legitimate to argue whether the correct wording was used in the *NSS* 2002, the document did specifically refer to the right of the United States to take “anticipatory action...” to “preempt emerging threats.” Whether it is preemption, prevention, or anticipatory action, they are, in the final analysis, military tactics to protect the United States against transnational terrorists, not the strategic goal of United States foreign policy.

THE AMBITIOUS FREEDOM AGENDA

Those who focus on the goal, not means, of American foreign policy under the Bush administration pointed out the importance of the freedom agenda in the Bush doctrine.

Mackubin Thomas Owens maintains that the “essence” of the Bush Doctrine is the statement President George W. Bush made in his Second Inaugural Address: “It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world” (2009:26).

From abroad, Justin Vaisse, of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, in a paper written for the Institute of European Studies, University of California at Berkeley, considered promoting democracy world-wide as the essence of the Bush doctrine. He wrote, “At its core, the Bush doctrine emphasizes the importance of promoting democracy as a way to solve many of the long-term political and security problems of the greater Middle East. It rests on the view that American military power and assertive diplomacy should be used to defeat tyrannies, challenge the status quo and coerce states into abandoning weapons of mass destruction and support for

terrorism –without worrying too much about legitimacy or formal multilateralization” (2006: 4).

Clearly, academics, like journalists, also have difficulty to come up with a commonly acceptable single definition of the Bush doctrine. However, they do share one thing in common. Whether they argue that the Bush doctrine has two, three, four, or seven elements, or that there are several Bush doctrines, all of them, except for Vaisse, list preemption or prevention as a crucial element of the Bush doctrine. While Vaisse did not specifically mention preemption or prevention by name, he did consider intervention against Iraq “the centerpiece of the Bush doctrine” (Ibid:5).

Perhaps the focus on the American invasion of Iraq and writing after the publication of the *NSS 2002* have led to this tendency of associating preemption or prevention with the Bush doctrine. I would argue that the Bush doctrine is not the doctrine of preemptive or preventive war.

TOWARD A SINGLE DEFINITION OF THE BUSH DOCTRINE

A presidential doctrine must have two components: a presidential declaration, usually in his inaugural address or a major speech to Congress, on a major thrust of United States foreign policy; and concrete policies and actions to implement such declaration. Presidents do not normally put their names on their most important statements about U.S. foreign policy. Scholars and commentators choose them and name them after the presidents who announce them. The names stick when there is substantial agreement of scholars and commentators over time. Take containment, for example. George Kennan, author of the famous “long cable” from Moscow analyzing Soviet expansionist impulse, was the intellectual father of the strategy, but it did not become the official strategy of the United States until President Truman, when faced with communist insurgencies in Greece and Turkey, decided to allocate aid to foreign governments to stop Soviet expansionism and declared on March 12, 1947, “I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures...” The term “containment” was not found in the “long cable” nor in Truman’s March 12, 1947 declaration, but in an article “by X,” the pseudo-name of George Kennan, in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, explaining the rationale for a United States policy toward the Soviet Union that must be based on “a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant *containment* of Soviet expansive tendencies” (1947:575).² Since then containing communism was known as the Truman doctrine, the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy for almost half a century. The same may be said of the Eisenhower doctrine, the Nixon doctrine, the Carter doctrine, and the Reagan doctrine.

What, then, may be considered the Bush doctrine? The defining foreign policy of the Bush administration after September 11, 2001, has been the global war on transnational terrorists. What was the president’s overarching strategy? On September 20, 2001, nine days after the terrorists’ attacks, in his address to a joint session of Congress, Bush declared a “civilization’s fight” against the terrorists. He told the world, “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists ... We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them

² Emphasis added by author.

one against another, drive them from place to place until there is no refuge or no rest... And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism.” The president vowed to “stop [terrorism], eliminate it and destroy it.” It was based on this that the administration started two major wars at the dawn of the twenty-first century – one in Afghanistan and one in Iraq.

This line of reasoning is supported by the way previous presidential doctrines were recognized. President Nixon made a major speech at Guam in 1969 stating that the U.S. remained involved in Asia as a Pacific power, but would limit itself to providing logistic support to those countries whose forces were willing to bear the primary combat responsibility, in other words, “no more Vietnam.” This was put in practice by the process of “Vietnamization” and gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. The Carter doctrine resulted from his State of the Union Address on January 23, 1979 in which he warned that “The Soviet effort to dominate Afghanistan had brought Soviet military forces within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Strait of Hormuz—a waterway through which much of the free world’s oil must flow. Any attempt by outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. It will be repelled by use of any means necessary, including military forces.” This was implemented through United States aid to the Afghan *mujaheddin*. Again, the Reagan doctrine came into being when the president called the Soviet Union an “evil empire” and, in his State of the Union Address on February 6, 1985, pledged support for “freedom fighters” who are “risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth.” This doctrine translated in United States support for the contra in Nicaragua, for UNITA in Angola, the “freedom fighters” in Afghanistan, and the anti-Vietnamese coalition in Cambodia.

What about “preemption”? The word “preemption” was not the result of a presidential declaration, it was described in the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States* by the National Security Council, and it said, “While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against ... terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country.” This action against the danger of terrorism is on a par with other measures to combat terrorism the president declared in his famous “axis of evil” State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, “First, we will shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans, and bring terrorists to justice. And, second, we must prevent the terrorists and regimes that seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world.” Just as NSC-68 serves as the basis for the Truman doctrine of containment against communism, the 2002 *NSS* document serves as a justification for the Bush doctrine of global war against terrorism; it is not the Bush doctrine.

Also, preemption is a right every country claims for itself. It is, as Elliot Abrams pointed out in a Security Policy Forum at George Washington University, “a logical and natural extension of practice in international politics.”³ Even *NSS* 2002 admits that preemption is nothing new when it affirms, “The United States has long maintained the

³ “Reflections on the Bush doctrine,” Security Policy Forum, the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, April 16, 2009 (author’s notes).

option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our security.” Besides, preemption is only a military tactic to carry out the goal of the war against transnational terrorists, just as “massive retaliation” a means to carry out the goal of containing communism under the Eisenhower administration.

What about “unilateralism”? Unilateralism is an approach to foreign policy, versus multilateralism, not a strategy against international terrorism. The same can be said about Peter Feaver’s classification of “the willingness to use a ‘coalition of the willing’ if the United Nations does not address threats” in his count of “seven distinct Bush doctrines.”

What about the sweeping “Bush Doctrine of Liberty,” as announced in the president’s second inaugural speech? On January 20, 2005, President Bush declared: “The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world ... So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institution in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.... All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for liberty we will stand with you.” This is indeed bold but not new. Robert Kagan insisted at the above mentioned Security Policy Forum that there was nothing about supporting democracy that had not been said before; it had been spoken for by Truman and Kennedy.⁴ He even went further to say that there was no Bush doctrine because neither preemption nor democracy promotion was new.

George W. Bush’s grand design to end “tyranny in our world” is comparable to Woodrow Wilson’s dream about “a war to end all wars.” If the goal of launching a “war to end all wars” is not considered a Wilson doctrine then the same must be said of Bush’s ambitious goal of “ending tyranny in our world.” It is in the same category of the “roll up” the Iron Curtain policy during the Eisenhower-Dulles era when it collapsed in the face of the 1953 uprising in East Germany and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. It is aspirational, not operational. Is it reasonable to elevate to the status of a presidential doctrine a policy, which has not been implemented seriously and consistently?

For the above reasons, I would argue that the key to the Bush doctrine must be found in the president’s September 20, 2001 speech to the Congress on the division of the world into two camps –the civilized world and the terrorists who aim to destroy it –and his declaration of a global war against transnational terrorists. In that case, while the Bush policies of preemption, unilateralism, and “ending tyranny in this world” may be accused of hubris, moral imperialism, or utopianism, the Bush doctrine that underlines the global war against transnational terrorists should gain more legitimacy, continuity, and international cooperation. It also reinforces the validity of the current administration’s search to end nuclear proliferation. At the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit Barack Obama warned, “the risk of nuclear confrontation between nations has gone down, but the risk of

⁴ President Truman declared in his address to the joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947 that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” President Kennedy in his inaugural address, January 20, 1960, told the world, “We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.”

nuclear attack has gone up.”⁵ As a case in point, on the eve of the conference he underlined that the possibility of a terrorist organization obtaining a nuclear weapons was “the single biggest threat to United States security, both short-term, medium-term, and long-term [and that it] could change the security landscape of this country and the world for years to come.”⁶

THE BUSH DOCTRINE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Bush doctrine of eliminating terrorists and those who harbor them is, thus, the third overarching foreign policy strategy of the United States since the end of the Second World War, after the Truman doctrine of containing communist expansion and the Reagan doctrine of rolling up the “evil empire.”

The Bush doctrine is fundamentally different from all other presidential doctrines since the end of World War II in another aspect. Previous presidential doctrines are designed to deal with one common threat to American security: communist expansionism. While the Reagan doctrine represents a radical departure from the way the United States deals with that threat by moving from a defensive to an offensive strategy, it is still designed to deal with the same threat. The Bush doctrine is conceived to deal with a completely different kind of threat in a new global environment. To Bush, since September 2001, the major threat to the United States and to “the civilized world” do not come from a nation-state, a group of nation-states or an empire, but it comes from extremist forces, from religion-based terrorists and networks of terrorists who operate globally in the dangerous context of weapons of mass destruction proliferation, and it comes from failing states⁷ and, as Rumsfeld put it, from asymmetrical threats posed by “enemies who hide in caves and shadows and strike in unexpected ways.”⁸

The Obama administration initially tried to avoid using the word “war on terror,” but the Christmas 2009 failed attempt to bomb Northwest Airlines flight 253 that awakened Americans again to the continued danger of being attacked not only abroad but also at home, and criticism of the president as “pretending we are not at war”⁹ have forced have forced President Obama to repeatedly affirm, both in his January 2, 2010 weekly address and his January 7, 2010 remarks on the “systemic failure” of our TSA security system, that “we are at war against al-Qaeda, a far-reaching network of violence and hatred that attacked us on 9/11 ... and that is plotting to strike us again,” and promised that “we will do whatever it takes to defeat them.”¹⁰ Three days after the failed

⁵ See President Obama’s Speech at the Nuclear Security Summit, Washington, DC, April 13, 2010.

⁶ See Obama’s remarks to the press on the eve of the Nuclear Security Summit, April 11, 2010.

⁷ *The National Security Strategy (NSS) 2002* affirmed “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank.” The document also mentioned the threats posed by “terrorists and aggressive regimes seeking weapons of mass destruction.”

⁸ See *The Washington Post*, May 22, 2003.

⁹ See former Vice-President Dick Cheney’s statement to *Politico*, December 30, 2009.

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1209/31054.html>.

¹⁰ In his January 2, 2010 weekly address, President Obama reminded the American people that he had made it very clear on inaugural day that “our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and

attack, in a statement on December 28, 2009, the president specifically identified it as an “attempted terrorist attack” and pledged to take the necessary measures to prevent “future act of terrorism.”

Now that al-Qaeda and terrorist networks, and their recruiting grounds have spread from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Yemen, Somalia, Algeria, Nigeria, and even into Western societies, it is clear that while the Bush administration might have erred on policies and tactics to deal with the them, President Bush has certainly put his finger on a major challenge to American security and its standing in the world as well as to modern civilization—religion-based transnational terrorists.¹¹ That, I believe, is the essence of the Bush doctrine.

hatred, and that we will do whatever it takes to defeat them and defend our country.” Five days later, on January 7, 2010, the president said, “Over the past two weeks, we’ve been reminded again of the challenge we face in protecting our country against a foe that is bent on our destruction . . . We are at war. We are at war against al Qaeda, a far-reaching network of violence and hatred that attacked us on 9/11, that killed nearly 3,000 innocent people and that is plotting to strike us again. And we will do whatever it takes to defeat them.”

¹¹ In his speech to the National Endowment for Democracy on October 6, 2005, Bush called them “Islamic radicalism.” Obama, in his statement on December 28, 2009, called them “violent extremists.”

COMPARING THE TRUMAN, THE REAGAN, AND THE BUSH DOCTRINES

Doctrine	Truman	Reagan	Bush
<i>World View</i>	Dividing the world into two camps: the free world vs. the communist world	Dividing the world into two camps: the free world vs. the communist world	Dividing the world into two camps: the civilized world vs. the terrorists
<i>Goal</i>	Containing Communist expansion	Rolling up the evil empire	Eliminating transnational terrorism
<i>Presidential Statement</i>	Truman’s address to Congress, March 12, 1947	Reagan’s State of the Union Address, February 6, 1985	Bush’s address to Congress, September 20, 2001
<i>Basic Document</i>	NSC Report-68*	NSDD17**	NSS-2002***
<i>Military strategy</i>	Conventional war (Korea) Counterinsurgency warfare (Vietnam) Massive retaliation Nuclear deterrence	Invasion (Grenada) Counterinsurgency warfare (El Salvador) Subversive warfare (Nicaragua)	Shock and awe (Iraq) Special warfare (Afghanistan) Preemptive attack Preventive strike

*National Security Council Report 68, April 14, 1950, warned of the “Kremlin’s design of world domination,” rejected isolationism, and called for “a more rapid build up of political, economic, and military strength of the free world” to deter Soviet aggression.

**National Security Decision Directive 17 (NSC-NSDD-17), January 4, 1982, recommended economic aid to Central America, military assistance to El Salvador, and support for “democratic forces” in Nicaragua.

***National Security Strategy, September 2002, announced U.S. strategy to “disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations of global reach and attack their leadership; command, control, and communications; material support and finances,” and the U.S. right, to “act preemptively,” if necessary, to eliminate the “deadly challenges from rogue states and terrorists.

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