

## 12 The making of American foreign policy

The power of the president in foreign affairs, combining the roles of national leader, chief diplomat and commander-in-chief, is the major factor that distinguishes the making of foreign policy from the domestic policy process. But the president's power is by no means unrestrained. The Constitution provides for the ratification of treaties by the Senate and for the declaration of war by Congress, and these provisions retain significance, even though presidents since Franklin Roosevelt have found ways to circumvent them. Congress has the final say over finance, and can legislate to determine policies in the field of foreign affairs if it wishes. The president can, in certain circumstances, take decisive action in foreign policy but, though freer to act than in the domestic sphere, is not wholly free from pluralistic pressures in this field, particularly when, as in trade policy, it is necessary to get the approval of Congress. Thus, since the Second World War, there has been a long list of presidential initiatives in the use of American forces abroad, involving differing degrees of action independent of Congress. These situations provide a sharp contrast to the problems presidents have faced in the attempt to regulate America's trade relations with foreign nations.

During the nineteenth century the United States was hardly involved in world affairs outside the Western hemisphere. This was partly the result of a natural isolationism, a wish to remain aloof from the 'decadent' politics of Europe, but it was also because the United States was engaged in a great imperial adventure to acquire the entire American continent stretching from the Appalachians to the Pacific. However, the Americans were concerned from the beginning of the Union to prevent incursions into any part of the Americas, and President Monroe enunciated the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 stating that 'the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.' However, the ability of the United States to engage in territorial expansion and at the same time to 'guarantee' the integrity of the whole hemisphere was really dependent on the existence of the British Navy. The United States did not become a significant naval power until the beginning of the twentieth

century. Nevertheless, the right of the United States itself to intervene in the internal politics of foreign states in the Western hemisphere was asserted by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904. This was the *ex post facto* justification of the Spanish–American war of 1898, resulting in the acquisition of the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam, the bringing of Cuba under US protection and incidentally the annexation of Hawaii.

The determination to remain aloof from European political squabbles continued until 1917, when America reluctantly entered the First World War, largely as a result of German submarine warfare against American merchant shipping and Allied ships in which Americans were killed. However, isolationism remained a potent force in American politics and after the war the Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, although President Woodrow Wilson had been its chief architect. As a result the United States did not become a member of the League of Nations, a considerable contribution to the ineffectual nature of that body. Isolationism remained strong in Congress and among influential pressure groups during the inter-war period; three Neutrality Acts were passed, the last of which, in 1937, forbade the export of arms or ammunition to foreign nations at war with each other, and prohibited the arming of American merchant ships. It was not until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in December 1941 that the United States entered the Second World War.

Although isolationist voices were to be heard after the end of the Second World War and still are today, an isolationist foreign policy could no longer be sustained. President Franklin Roosevelt, along with Churchill and Stalin, inspired the establishment of the United Nations, whose Charter was drafted at the San Francisco conference and signed in June 1945, two months after the death of Roosevelt. But the American commitment to an internationalist foreign policy was also assured by the circumstances of the post-war period. The fear of communism, long a potent force in America, was reinforced by the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe and the blockade of West Berlin in 1948. American troops were to remain in Europe and Japan and in bases around the world for the foreseeable future. The build-up of nuclear weapons became a top priority. Furthermore, the United States played a decisive role in the creation of Israel by the United Nations in 1948. The continuing American support of Israel, in the face of the hostility of Arab states and other Muslim countries, laid the foundation for the present-day involvement in the Middle East and became a central element in the neoconservative approach to foreign policy that would be so important in the presidency of George W. Bush.

One of the consequences of the relative decline of isolationism and the continued role of the armed forces of the United States around the world has been the increased significance of the Department of Defense in the administration. The Department of State, the American ministry of foreign affairs, was formerly the department which formulated foreign policy, but

since the Second World War, and particularly during conflicts such as the Vietnam War and the wars in Iraq, the Department of Defense has challenged its position. Traditionally Americans were suspicious of a standing army and of the power of the military, as evidenced by President Eisenhower's warning about the dangers of the 'military-industrial complex'. In 2004, however, the defence budget of the federal government totalled \$455.9 billion, representing 18.4 per cent of federal government expenditures and nearly 4 per cent of the American gross national income. In the lead-up to the Iraq conflict in 2002 Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, eclipsed the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in the formulation of foreign policy, and the President's National Security Adviser in the White House, Condoleezza Rice, for whatever reason does not seem to have moderated Rumsfeld's influence on the President. Let us turn then to the history of the development of American power and the roles of the various actors in the making of foreign policy.

## Korea and Vietnam

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman committed United States troops to the support of South Korea without consulting Congress. In 1945 Korea had been divided between the communist regime north of the 38th parallel of latitude and a regime supported by the United States south of that line. With the approval of Stalin, on 25 June 1950 in a surprise move the North Korean army moved across the 38th parallel in force, pushing back the much weaker South Korean forces. Truman, who was strongly committed to resisting Soviet expansion, chose to go to the United Nations for its consent to the use of military force, rather than to the United States Congress. Having won UN approval, he immediately despatched American troops to the Korean peninsula. The Chinese intervened to support North Korea; fifteen countries took some part in the UN action in support of the Americans. A cease fire was negotiated and hostilities ceased in July 1953, restoring the dividing line between North and South essentially where it had been before the war began. It has been estimated that more than 2 million people were killed, including more than 50,000 Americans. Truman's failure to obtain congressional approval for military action drew heavy criticism, and earned the sobriquet 'Truman's War' for the action.

Unlike the Korean War the war in Vietnam did not begin with a sudden surprise attack. Vietnam had been part of the French colonial regime in Indochina. After the defeat of the French by communist insurgents at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the 'temporary' division of Vietnam into northern and southern zones was decided on at the Geneva Conference of that year. However, the intended unification of the country after free elections did not take place; in the North the communist government of Ho Chi Minh was established and in the South an American-backed regime resisted his attempts to take over. In November 1955 President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent a Military Assistance

Advisory Group to help train the army of South Vietnam. The presence of American 'advisers' marked the beginning of involvement in Vietnam which was to last until the withdrawal of American troops in 1973.

As the conflict between the North and the South intensified, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy increased the number of advisers by sending 400 'Green Berets' to Vietnam and, by the time of his assassination in 1963, he had despatched a total of 16,000 troops there, but still only under the pretence that they were 'advisers'. However, his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, changed the whole nature of the conflict. In 1965 he ordered American combat units into South Vietnam and also ordered the bombing of targets in North Vietnam. Although no congressional declaration of war was sought, Johnson did ask Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which they duly did in 1964. This Resolution was based on the highly contentious assertion that a US warship had been attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Korean forces. The resolution provided that Congress 'approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.' On the basis of this vague grant of authority Johnson gradually increased the number of American troops in Vietnam until in August 1966 there were 429,000 American servicemen there. The exercise of presidential power as commander-in-chief reached its peak when President Richard Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia in 1970 and of Laos in 1971, both neutral states. Arthur M. Schlesinger wrote:

With Nixon as with Johnson, the central role for Congress in foreign affairs was to provide aid and comfort to the Commander in Chief. He never sought its advice before major initiatives, and acknowledged its existence afterwards mainly by inviting members of Congress to hear Henry Kissinger tell them in mass briefings what they had already read, if less stylishly expressed, in the newspapers.

Congress began to move against Nixon's conduct of the war in the way most open to a legislature – by the withholding of funds. The Resolution on the War in Cambodia prohibited the use of public funds 'to finance combat activities . . . over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia'. This was followed by the War Powers Resolution of 1973, which forbade the president to commit troops to hostilities, except after a declaration of war, under specific statutory authorisation from Congress or in a national emergency created by an attack on the United States or its possessions. Even in case of a national emergency the president is required to consult with Congress 'in every possible instance'. The practicability of this assertion of the power of the legislature was soon put in question by President Ford's action in retaking the *Mayaguez*. In 1975, Khmer Rouge soldiers seized the *Mayaguez*, a US merchant ship. President Ford responded by ordering air

strikes on Cambodian oil installations and the landing of troops at Koh Tang Island. The ship was seized and the crew repatriated. As we shall see the War Powers Resolution has generally been ignored by American presidents when they considered military action to be necessary.

## **Police actions**

The wars in Korea and Vietnam, even though characterised by presidential actions that were taken without congressional approval or prior knowledge, were protracted and necessarily conducted in a blaze of publicity. A number of military adventures, however, were planned and executed in secrecy. These were essentially attempts to control the course of events in an area, the Caribbean and Central America, that Americans consider to be their 'own back yard'.

The United States had intervened a number of times in the politics of the Dominican Republic, the eastern part of the island of Hispaniola, during the twentieth century. In 1965 political instability in the Republic led President Lyndon Johnson to fear that there was danger of a communist takeover and he despatched 22,000 troops there. Initially he claimed that he acted to protect the lives of American citizens, but it became clear that the real reason was to prevent a 'Cuban-style' revolution. A similar situation developed on the island of Grenada in 1983 when an avowedly communist leader seized power. President Ronald Reagan ordered an invasion of the island. Although Grenada was a member of the Commonwealth, with a British Governor-General, Reagan did not even consult his good friend Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of the United Kingdom, before the invasion. Because of the importance of the Panama Canal, strategically and to American trade, the United States has long had an interest in the internal politics of Panama and was instrumental in Panama gaining its independence from Colombia in 1903. The United States was in charge of the administration of the Canal Zone, but it had been agreed that this arrangement would come to an end in 1989. The rise of a dictator, General Manuel Noriega, thought to have been involved in drug-trafficking and possibly not going to cooperate with the United States, represented a threat to American interests in this vital strategic facility. President Bush ordered 25,000 American troops into Panama. Noriega sought asylum in the Vatican Embassy, but was arrested by the Americans and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Haiti, the western part of Hispaniola, has also been an object of American attention over its tumultuous history; it was under American occupation from 1915 to 1934. In 1994 a repressive military regime incurred the wrath of the United Nations Security Council, which authorised member states to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure of Haiti's military leadership and to restore the constitutionally elected government to power. President Clinton sent American troops to Haiti to ensure the return of the democratically

elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Whatever the rights and wrongs of each of these interventions they involved presidential actions to maintain American dominance in the area, without seeking the approval of Congress.

### **Secret operations**

The policies described so far relate to events where the president may have acted without consulting Congress, or precipitated situations by unilateral action. There are, however, some foreign policy acts where it seems that it was assumed by the president, or at least by some of his advisers, that perhaps the truth would never come out. Such was the disastrous Bay of Pigs adventure in 1961 when a force of Cuban exiles, trained and supplied by the CIA, attempted an invasion of Cuba with the aim of overthrowing the Castro regime. The planning for the operation had begun secretly under President Eisenhower and it was launched under President Kennedy's administration. The invasion was a miserable failure and Kennedy initially denied any involvement. The Iran-Contra affair was a similarly ill-judged operation carried out in secrecy by members of President Reagan's staff. What exactly the president himself knew about the operation was never established. In 1985 the United States government began selling arms to Iran, with the intention of obtaining the release of American hostages taken by Hezbollah in the Lebanon. Although illegal under American law, the operation was approved and conducted by Reagan's closest advisers. To make things worse the proceeds of the arms sales, millions of dollars, were used to finance the activities of the Contra guerrillas in Nicaragua who were fighting against the democratically elected communist government. John Poindexter, the president's National Security Adviser, and Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver North, a member of his staff, conducted the affair in a series of extraordinary operations worthy of a James Bond film; both were convicted, although later the convictions were overturned.

Other secret operations about which presidents may, or may not, have known include attempted assassinations in which the CIA and US government officials were involved. In 1975 a Senate Select Committee chaired by Senator Frank Church (the Church Committee) investigated allegations that the CIA had been implicated in assassinations or attempted assassinations of the leaders of a number of Third World countries – Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Hgo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam and General Rene Schneider of Chile. The Committee concluded that in 1960 two CIA officials were asked by their superiors to assassinate Lumumba and poison was sent to the Congo; Lumumba was later assassinated, but the Committee concluded that there was no evidence that the United States was involved in the killing. As for Castro the Committee reported that:

United States Government personnel plotted to kill Castro from 1960 to 1965. American underworld figures and Cubans hostile to Castro were

used in these plots, and were provided encouragement and material support by the United States.

Trujillo was shot by Dominican dissidents in 1961, but although ‘three pistols and three carbines were furnished by American officials’ it was not known if these weapons were used in the killing. The killing of Diem in 1963, the Committee decided, was ‘carried out without United States involvement or support’; and, although the United States had supplied financial aid and machine guns to groups plotting a military coup in Chile in 1970, the Committee concluded that there was no evidence of CIA involvement in the assassination of General Schneider. The Committee also reported that it had ‘received evidence that ranking Government officials discussed and may have authorized, the establishment within the CIA of a generalized assassination capability.’

As is the case with so many of the secret operations we have discussed, it is impossible to determine how far up the chain of command these activities were known about or initiated. In particular the involvement of the presidents in office at the time remains in doubt. The Church Committee reported that ‘the system of executive command and control was so ambiguous that it is difficult to be certain at what levels assassination activity was known and authorized . . . Whether or not the respective presidents knew of or authorized the plots, as chief executive officer of the United States, each must bear the ultimate responsibility for the activities of his subordinates.’ As a result of these investigations President Gerald Ford issued an Executive Order in 1976 proclaiming a ban on involvement in assassination plots, and both President Carter and President Reagan later issued similar orders. However, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 led to demands that these Executive Orders should be revoked by President George W. Bush or overridden by Congress, so that those responsible for the attacks could be targeted wherever they might be. Indeed in September 2001 Congress passed a wide-ranging measure authorising the president to ‘use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided’ the terrorist attacks. A Congressional Research Service Report in 2002 expressed the view that this legislation ‘might be viewed as sufficient, insofar as U.S. responses to the events of September 11, 2001 are concerned, to encompass actions that might otherwise be prohibited under the assassination ban.’

## **The Clinton years**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 faced the United States with a completely new world. The Cold War was over; the US was now the sole superpower; there was no obvious threat to America. When President Clinton took office in 1993 there were no clear foreign policy guidelines to follow, so he responded with a series of ad hoc responses to problems as they arose. The Clinton years were a transitional period between the certainties of the Cold

War and the effects that the events of 11 September 2001, in the context of the neoconservative philosophy of a number of members of the administration, had on American foreign policy. One aspect of Clinton's policies that distinguished him from his successor, however, was his determination, as far as possible, to follow a multilateral approach to foreign policy issues, involving collaboration with other like-minded countries, and acting through international institutions, rather than the unilateralist tendencies of the administration under his successor, George W. Bush. However, during six of the eight years of his presidency Clinton was faced with a Republican-controlled Congress, which was more than usually partisan, largely as a result of the leadership in the House of Representatives exercised by the Speaker, Newt Gingrich.

The first foreign policy problem faced by Clinton was really inherited from his predecessor. George H.W. Bush had supported United Nations efforts to assure humanitarian supplies to the people of Somalia. The lawless character of that area meant that humanitarian workers came under attack from the 'warlords' who dominated Somalia. In October 1993 a US-led operation in the capital, Mogadishu, was ambushed and eighteen US soldiers were killed and another seventy-nine were injured. This led to the withdrawal of American troops and the 'Battle of Mogadishu' profoundly affected Clinton's foreign policy. No intervention was undertaken to try to halt the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and, as we shall see, he was very reluctant to commit ground troops in the Balkans.

Clinton also had to deal with the early terrorist attacks on America and American targets. Only a month after his inauguration a huge truck bomb was exploded in the car park under one of the towers of the World Trade Center, later to be destroyed in the 2001 attack. The bomb killed six people and injured a thousand. A number of people were convicted of planning or carrying out this atrocity, including Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, an extremist Sunni Muslim cleric. Also in 1993, an attempted terrorist attack was directed at former President George H.W. Bush, who was to make a speech at Kuwait University; the attack was foiled by the Kuwaitis, who blamed Saddam Hussein, and in June the US launched a retaliatory missile attack on Baghdad. On 7 August 1998, the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were attacked, and Osama bin Laden was considered to be responsible. On 20 August, President Clinton ordered cruise missile strikes, code-named Operation Infinite Reach, against a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan and a suspected chemical weapons plant in the Sudan. Just before the end of his presidency, al-Qaeda suicide bombers attacked an American destroyer, the *USS Cole*, in Aden harbour, killing seventeen sailors. Clinton has been criticised for not having done enough to counter the growing threat of al-Qaeda during his presidency. A special unit was set up within the CIA to track bin Laden and plans were made to try to capture him, but never implemented. Neither the Clinton administration nor the new Bush administration before

9/11 was able to develop a coherent plan for reviewing intelligence about potential terrorist attacks or developing a counter-terrorist policy.

The most difficult foreign policy problems faced by President Clinton arose from the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, as successive provinces sought independence from the multi-ethnic federation dominated by Serbia. First Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, and then in the following year a referendum was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Province of Bosnia and Herzegovina was composed of three major ethnic groupings, Serbs who wished to remain part of Yugoslavia, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum and independence was approved by a majority of 98 per cent of those who voted. The declaration of independence in April 1992 resulted in the outbreak of hostilities. A United Nations peace-keeping force was sent to the area, but was never strong enough to keep the peace; a number of atrocities were committed, particularly the massacre of approximately 8,000 Muslim males by the Bosnian Serb army under the command of General Mladić at Srebrenica in July 1995.

During the election campaign of 1992 Clinton said he would, if necessary, use military force to bring humanitarian aid to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But when in office he faced considerable opposition, not least by the Pentagon, to military involvement in the Balkans, and he soon made clear that American troops would only be used to enforce a peace agreement when one was achieved, although France, Britain, Canada, Spain and other countries had already contributed troops to the UN peace-keeping force. However, he did authorise the dropping of food and supplies to embattled enclaves in Bosnia by the US Air Force, and US planes took part in enforcing a no-fly zone by the Serbians over Bosnia. Clinton did propose that the US should provide arms for Bosnian Muslims, but this plan was rejected by the European countries. In April 1994 the increasing violence in Bosnia, and the siege of Gorazde, led the British general in command of United Nations peace-keepers in Bosnia, Sir Michael Rose, to request limited air strikes by NATO planes, and Clinton quickly agreed. Frequent changes of policy by the Clinton administration and differences of opinion with the European powers about strategy bedevilled the whole operation. However, President Clinton undertook a vigorous diplomatic operation to achieve an accord between the warring groups, culminating in a meeting of the parties in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995. Agreement was reached, even though during the process of the negotiations the House of Representatives voted by 243 to 171 to deny the use of funds to send US troops to join a peace-keeping force in Bosnia. Once the agreement was reached President Clinton ordered American troops to Bosnia, and both the Senate and the House gave their approval.

The situation that developed in Kosovo had many similarities to the Bosnian conflict. Kosovo, a province of Serbia, which was then part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has an overwhelming majority of ethnic Albanians,

and a history of demands for independence, strongly resisted by the Serbian and Yugoslav governments. Separatist groups of Albanians agitated for independence, and inter-communal violence occurred during the 1990s. After the Dayton Accord of 1995 a Kosovo Liberation Army was formed and carried out attacks on Serbian security forces and others; the Yugoslav army entered the conflict and there was widespread violence and the movement of refugees on a large scale. NATO attempted to broker a settlement between the Kosovo Albanians and Slobodan Milošević, who became President of Yugoslavia in 1997. However, these attempts failed and NATO began a bombing campaign against Serbia in March 1999, using predominantly American aircraft together with cruise missiles.

The NATO action did not have the sanction of the United Nations, and President Clinton's decision to commit American forces to NATO met strong opposition in Congress. The Senate had voted to support air strikes, but in April the House of Representatives voted 249 to 180 to bar the President from sending ground troops to Yugoslavia without Congressional approval. In a further vote, which was tied, the House also refused to support the NATO air strikes which were taking place against Serbia. The air strikes continued and after some weeks and considerable destruction and loss of life Milošević accepted the entry of NATO troops, under UN control, into Kosovo; American and other troops arrived in June, and Kosovo became in effect a UN protectorate. The *New York Times* summarised the results of Clinton's foreign policy in the Balkans:

On Bosnia in the early years and then on Kosovo in 1999, the president did shrink from military action while hostilities continued and innocent people died. But the war in Bosnia was settled at an administration-sponsored peace conference in Ohio in 1995, and a few weeks of American bombing persuaded Slobodan Milosevic to give up his assault on Kosovo in 1999. By the time Clinton left office, Bosnia was in the midst of a peaceful recovery, and Milosevic had been deposed from power and was awaiting trial as a war criminal.

## **The wars in Iraq**

In August 1990 Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq, ordered his army to attack neighbouring Kuwait. This small but oil-rich country was quickly overrun and annexed by Iraq. The United Nations passed a number of resolutions condemning the Iraqi occupation, setting a deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and authorising the use of force if it did not. The United States played a leading role in the diplomatic manoeuvres at the United Nations and, when Saddam Hussein ignored the demand to withdraw, President George H.W. Bush led a coalition of thirty nations to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait. The American Congress also passed a resolution authorising the use of force, so that, although differing views were held about the real motives

for the United States engaging in the war, the legality of the action and the openness of the process were not in doubt. The military superiority of the American-led forces over those of Iraq was overwhelming; the Iraqi army was quickly defeated in Kuwait and in the neighbouring border regions of Iraq itself. It would have been easy for President Bush to order the US forces to continue their drive to Baghdad to depose Saddam Hussein, as a number of his advisers wished. However, Bush decided to adhere to what he considered to be the intention of the United Nations, to free Kuwait, and the troops were halted and withdrawn from the territory of Iraq.

Although the legality of the Gulf War, as it was called, was not in doubt, the political background to the conflict was complex. The politics of oil, the human rights record of Saddam Hussein's regime, a possible challenge to the role of America's ally, Saudi Arabia, and not least Saddam Hussein's hostility to Israel all played a part in the reaction of the Bush administration to the attack on Kuwait. The Gulf War eliminated none of these factors and indeed heightened some of them in the eyes of many interested groups in the United States. The accession of Bill Clinton to the presidency in 1993 masked somewhat the importance of these groups on the American political scene, but they remained very focused in their attitudes towards Iraq and the regime of Saddam Hussein.

An interesting example of the activities of a pressure group on this issue is the behaviour of a neoconservative group called 'The Project for the New American Century'. This group concerned itself with the assertion that Saddam Hussein was developing 'weapons of mass destruction' and if allowed to continue to do so would threaten the stability of the whole of the Middle East. In a letter to President Clinton in January 1998 the group called for a new strategy, arguing that 'That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power.' The authors of the letter argued that the process of using United Nations inspectors to determine whether Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction was ineffective and causing great uncertainty. The letter continued:

Such uncertainty will, by itself, have a seriously destabilizing effect on the entire Middle East. It hardly needs to be added that if Saddam does acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will all be put at hazard. As you have rightly declared, Mr. President, the security of the world in the first part of the 21st century will be determined largely by how we handle this threat.

'Regime change' in Iraq was, therefore, the aim of this group, long before the decision was taken to invade Iraq in 2002, but this was no ordinary pressure group. The letter was signed by Donald Rumsfeld, later to become Secretary

of Defense in George W. Bush's administration, and by Paul Wolfowitz, the future Deputy Secretary of Defense. Although he did not sign this letter, Richard B. Cheney, the future Vice-President, was a member of the group, as were John Bolton and Richard Perle. On 11 September 2001 four commercial airliners were hijacked by terrorists. Two were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, killing nearly three thousand people, one crashed into the Pentagon Building, housing the Department of Defense in Virginia, killing 184 people, and the fourth was heading for Washington, DC, when it crashed in Pennsylvania as a result of actions taken by passengers. The terrorists were linked to Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, a group dedicated to the establishment of a radical Islamic regime. Bin Laden was resident in Afghanistan and associated with the Taliban, the group then in power there. In the wake of the public outrage following this atrocity, on 14 September Congress passed a resolution authorising the use of force in Afghanistan. The reaction of the United States was rapid; in collaboration with British forces, attacks on Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, began in October.

According to Bob Woodward in *Bush at War* both Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz began urging President Bush to include Iraq in the list of targets for military action in the days immediately after the 11 September attacks, although there was no evidence that Saddam Hussein had any connection with the terrorists. Very early it was assumed that the War on Terror would extend beyond Afghanistan. In October 2001 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld warned his department that action would need to be taken against states harbouring or supporting terrorism. In his speeches President Bush continually linked Iraq with al-Qaeda and terrorism, but above all his administration concentrated on the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The United Nations had been conducting inspections in Iraq, attempting to determine whether Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction, and he had placed considerable obstacles in their way. However, Hans Blix, the UN's Chief Inspector, later stated that:

In January 2003, we had performed quite a lot of inspections to sites which were given by intelligence and they had not shown any weapons of mass destruction, so we began to be doubtful . . . among the 700 inspections that we performed, none brought us any evidence of weapons of mass destruction. I warned the Security Council about that.

Attempts were made to gain authorisation from the United Nations to undertake military operations against Iraq, but they failed. Evidence that did not fit the picture the administration wanted to portray was swept aside, and in October 2002 Congress gave Bush full authority to attack Iraq. The assault, in collaboration with the United Kingdom and other nations, began in 2003. The initial military campaign was soon over, as was only to be expected in view of the overwhelming superiority of the United States' weaponry. But then began the process of attempting to pacify Iraq and to establish an

effective democratic government. The difficulty of achieving these aims had apparently not been appreciated by those who, rather naively, had assumed that deposing Saddam Hussein was all that would be necessary. Three years after the invasion these aims had still not been achieved and, as the number of American military personnel killed passed 2,500 in June 2006 and continued to climb, George W. Bush's approval rating with the American public fell to 30 per cent, and a majority of Americans who were polled expressed the view that the invasion of Iraq had been a mistake.

How do we explain the whole series of events leading up to the invasion of Iraq? The attack on Afghanistan is understandable in the light of the support it had given to al-Qaeda, but Iraq had not given such support, nor had it weapons of mass destruction. A particularly well-placed pressure group was able to influence a president already disposed towards their point of view by emphasising those points which supported their well-publicised belief in the need to depose Saddam Hussein and rejecting the arguments which threw doubt on their analysis. But the invasion of Iraq was not like the Korean War when American troops were sent within days of the outbreak of hostilities between North Korea and South Korea. The build-up of armed forces in the Gulf took months, and it was necessary to have the support of public opinion. The president was able to carry the majority in Congress with him, and also to obtain popular support for his policy. The acceptance by the public of the alleged link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda is easy to understand because the information they were being given pointed in that direction, and there was little being provided to the contrary. So many elements of the situation fitted in with the beliefs and interests of those at the centre of decision-taking. The importance of oil to America and to Americans is difficult to exaggerate, and both President Bush and Vice-President Cheney had close connections with the oil interests. The threat that Iraq posed to Israel, a country that the United States has strongly supported for nearly sixty years, was a theme that would draw a great deal of public approval. The sense that the Christian world might be under attack from those Muslim extremists wishing to destroy it could tap deep wells within the emotions of that large section of the American population that professes fundamental Christian beliefs. Saddam Hussein's autocratic regime and his undoubtedly cruel to large numbers of his own people made the aspiration to establish democracy in Iraq an appealing one. All these elements were to be found in the neoconservative ideology that bound together a number of the members of President Bush's advisers, particularly those in the Department of Defense, which was inevitably central to the formation of policy in the wake of 11 September 2001, and they were shared to a greater or lesser degree by many members of Congress.

### **The 'Axis of Evil'**

In January 2002, in the highly charged atmosphere following the terrorist attacks of the previous September, President George W. Bush delivered his

State of the Union speech to Congress. Having pointed with satisfaction to the rapid defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the President continued:

Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom.

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

Since this speech was made, the United States and its allies have tried to deal with the threat of Iraq, whatever the truth of Bush's statements about the intentions of its government, but the problems of Iran and North Korea remain. Nuclear proliferation lies at the heart of the dilemma facing the United States in dealing with the regimes in these countries to which it has been hostile for decades. North Korea already has nuclear weapons and it is feared that Iran is seeking to develop them. However, nuclear proliferation is not the sole concern, for Israel, India and Pakistan all possess a nuclear capability and these developments have been met with different reactions from American administrations. North Korea, the most hard-line communist regime still in existence, had to be handled very carefully, partly because of the possibility it might actually use its nuclear weapons against South Korea, a close ally of the United States, and partly because of its proximity to China. Iran, however, has been threatened with sanctions, and the Bush administration did not wholly rule out some kind of military strikes against nuclear installations, probably using cruise missiles. However, the experience of the war in Iraq has dented American confidence in this type of military action, and a Gallup poll taken in May 2006 found that only one in three Americans would support military action against Iran. The pressure on the United States to use diplomatic and economic measures to deal with the

problem of North Korea and Iran, in collaboration with Europe and China, is considerable.

## Cuba and Helms–Burton

The dominant role of the president in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy has always been recognised. We have seen that it has led to accusations of an ‘Imperial Presidency’, and that there are many examples of presidents committing the United States to armed combat with little or no involvement by the legislative branch. But these are the dramatic decisions to engage in military intervention, such as in Korea, Vietnam, and the Caribbean, or what are intended to be ‘short-term’ interventions, such as President Clinton’s decision to attack terrorist bases with cruise missiles in Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998. Other foreign policy issues, though less dramatic, are more characteristic of the pluralistic nature of the American decision-making process. The history of American policy towards Cuba, situated just 90 miles from the southern tip of Florida, is just such an issue.

The close involvement of the United States with Cuba began in 1898 with the Spanish–American War. The United States was instrumental in obtaining the independence of Cuba from Spain, but effectively transformed the island into an American protectorate, subject to the so-called Platt Amendment of 1901, which gave the United States the right to intervene to preserve Cuban independence and to maintain law and order. The internal government of Cuba, however, was characterised by graft, corruption and social injustice under a succession of presidents and dictators, until Fidel Castro overthrew the dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1958 and established a communist regime. Many Cubans escaped to the United States, settling mainly in Florida, establishing there a community implacably opposed to the Castro regime. In 1961 a group of Cuban exiles, with the support of the CIA, mounted the ill-fated invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. The close collaboration established between Castro and the government of the Soviet Union led to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, resulting from the attempt by the Soviet Union to install nuclear missiles on Cuba, a very real threat to the American mainland. The ensuing confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union brought the world to the brink of nuclear war, averted only when the Soviet Union backed down and diverted the ships carrying the missiles away from Cuba.

As part of its implementation of the communist commitment to the abolition of private property the Castro regime confiscated, without compensation, American-owned sugar mills, petrol refineries and other assets, then valued at \$2 billion. In retaliation Congress in 1961 passed the Foreign Assistance Act, which empowered the president to lay an embargo on all trade with Cuba, and President Kennedy duly complied the following year; the embargo has been in force ever since. For many years this had little effect on Cuba, because the Soviet Union heavily subsidised the Castro regime. Cuba

traded extensively with the Soviet Union and with the communist countries of Eastern Europe. In 1991, however, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Cuba found itself isolated and facing severe economic difficulties. The American embargo had never attempted to prevent Cuba trading with other countries, and in the difficult situation now facing it, the Castro government decided to try to encourage foreign investment in Cuba, by authorising overseas companies to collaborate with state enterprises in the development of Cuban resources. The enterprises with which they collaborated, and in which they invested their capital, were often based on properties which had been confiscated over thirty years earlier from Americans or from Cubans then living in America. The fact that these foreign companies were profiting from confiscated assets brought together a formidable alliance whose aim was to deter foreign companies from investing in Cuba in this way.

In 1995 the House of Representatives passed a Bill sponsored by Republican Congressman Dan Burton from Indiana. The Bill set out a number of ways in which pressure would be put upon foreign firms trading with Cuba. American visas would be denied to the officers of foreign companies purchasing expropriated properties in Cuba, and Cuban-Americans could sue these foreign companies for damages in United States courts. Senator Jesse Helms, the Republican Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, introduced a similar Bill in the Senate. President Clinton made clear his opposition to the Bill, but there were powerful groups pressing for its passage. The Bill had become known as the 'Libertad' Bill, and Cuban exiles protested in Washington and Miami against Clinton's opposition to it. Cuban-Americans are important in the politics of Florida and of New Jersey, states that could influence the outcome of the election of November 1996 that was then looming on the horizon. Cuban pressure groups, such as the Cuban-American National Foundation, exercise considerable influence on Senators and Members of the House. The President's objections centred on the 'extra-territorial' sections of the Bill that would allow foreign corporations to be sued in US courts. This provision would anger nations friendly to the United States, such as Canada and the European countries, who would object to their nationals being subject to American law for activities carried on outside the United States, and with whom the administration had to deal on many other foreign policy issues. There was strong opposition also in the Senate to these extra-territorial provisions.

The potential deadlock over this legislative proposal was ended by an event that occurred in February 1996. Two civilian aircraft operated by 'Brothers to the Rescue', a group of Cuban exiles based in Miami, were shot down by a MiG fighter of the Cuban air force, and four people were killed. The Brothers frequently flew over the Florida Straits looking for refugees attempting to escape by boat to the United States. The Government of Cuba asserted that the planes had entered Cuban air space, but the United States maintained that they were shot down over international waters. In the wake of this incident the Senate quickly approved a radical version of the Helms-Burton Bill,

and President Clinton signed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act into law in March 1996.

The effect upon the international community was immediate. The European Union had been energetically developing trade links with Cuba; Canada and Mexico had companies operating in Cuba. The top executives of a Canadian company were declared ineligible to enter the United States, because it was mining nickel on property confiscated from an American company; a Mexican cement firm quickly agreed to suspend its activities in Cuba. Canada and the European Union protested against the Helms–Burton Act, and began intensive negotiations with the United States in order to get the Act amended. As part of the final negotiations for the passage of the Act, President Clinton had been able to get a clause inserted into the legislation authorising him to suspend that section of the Act which made it possible to sue foreign firms in American courts, if in his opinion to do so was in the national interest and would be likely to expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba. The suspension could be for a period of up to six months, and could be renewed. In January 1998 the President suspended this section for the fourth time in succession, drawing protests from Senator Helms about the failure of the Administration to implement the law.

There have been many attempts to repeal the Helms–Burton Act on the grounds that it has not brought down Castro's government and that more might be achieved by closer relationships with Cuba than by shunning it. Many business and agricultural groups oppose the policy because they lose the opportunity to trade with Cuba. In 2000 these groups had some success with the passage of the Trade Sanctions and Reform Export Enhancement Act which allowed the sale of agricultural products to Cuba on a cash basis. However, in general the prohibition on travel to, and trade with, Cuba remains in force, including the prohibition on the import of Cuban cigars, which some Americans find hard to bear. The 'extra-territorial' intent of Helms–Burton was illustrated in 2006 when the US Treasury ordered the Sheraton Hotel in Mexico City to evict a number of Cuban guests at the hotel who were participating in a conference on trade between the US and Cuba. The hotel complied.

### **International trade policy: CAFTA**

The making of policy regarding trade with other nations is, perhaps, the most complex area of government action in American politics. It involves complicated negotiations with other governments and with international organisations. The foreign governments will themselves be very divided in their interests and in their attitudes towards the United States: Europe, China, Japan, the developing countries. Internally, the cross-cutting divisions between contending economic groups affected by trade policy are endless; producers versus consumers, workers versus employers, industry versus agriculture, one agricultural product versus another product, one industry versus another

industry, large business versus small business. Overlaid on this complexity is a thick soup of ideological attitudes: free trade versus protectionism, internationalism versus isolationism, environmental concerns, anti-globalisation, and concern with human rights. Pluralism can go no further, yet the president and the administration must attempt to pick their way through this thicket, with the knowledge that in international trade policy, unlike the sphere of military action, every aspect of the outcome will be subject to the approval of Congress. In principle, successive administrations have been committed to a free trade policy, but in practice they come up against the deeply entrenched attitudes of those who consider that they will be adversely affected by this policy, or those who consider it to be morally indefensible.

The effects of this context of policy-making can be seen in the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was approved by Congress in 1993. This established a free trade area covering Mexico, the United States and Canada; in principle it provided for the abolition of tariffs and trade barriers between these three countries, but in practice President Clinton had to make so many concessions to different groups of American producers in order to get the necessary legislation through Congress that the actual result was far from the creation of a genuine free trade area. This issue created internal divisions within both political parties, and in order to win the votes in Congress President Clinton had to rely on the support of Republicans, as a majority of his own party were opposed to the Agreement. An extraordinary coalition formed in opposition to the passage of the legislation. The democratic leadership in the House of Representatives was joined by a most unusual alliance of pressure groups. David Houghton describes it thus:

The labour unions were especially determined to defeat the agreement . . . The congressional black caucus and former Democratic Party candidate Jesse Jackson had similar misgivings . . . The conservative journalist and Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan, the consumer advocate and Green Party candidate Ralf Nader and the Reform Party presidential candidate and Texan billionaire Ross Perot all weighed in against NAFTA.

The negotiations for NAFTA had started under President Bush and there was much more support for the agreement among industrial and commercial interests. Clinton had to rely therefore on the support of Republicans to pass the measure; in the event the vote in the Senate was thirty-four Republicans and twenty-seven Democrats for the agreement, and ten Republicans and twenty-eight Democrats against; in the House there was a similar pattern – 132 Republicans and 102 Democrats in favour, 43 Republicans and 156 Democrats against.

The federal government's involvement in the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been, if anything, more contentious. The WTO was the successor

to GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, devoted to furthering free trade throughout the world. Set up in 1995 WTO incorporates a mechanism for settling trade disputes between members, and the United States has been involved in many such disputes; with the European Union over genetically modified organisms, with Venezuela over oil, with Pakistan over cotton, with Japan over steel products, and so on. Each of these disputes involves considerable internal political controversy, provoking lobbying activities by the producer or consumer groups affected, and when a WTO decision goes against the United States it may be necessary for Congress to change the offending legislation, raising protests from protectionists.

The most dramatic effect of membership of the WTO, however, has come from the reaction of groups protesting about globalisation, who see the WTO as an arm of economic imperialism, being used by the United States and other developed countries to open up markets in underdeveloped countries and to subject them to unfair competition whilst retaining farm subsidies at home and protectionist policies when it suits them. Protests, which have often turned violent, followed the annual meetings of the WTO around the world; one of the worst took place in Seattle in 1999.

The United States is officially committed to the furtherance of free trade throughout the world, but this policy is fraught with difficulties, because there are so many interests hostile to it, both in the United States itself and in the countries affected by the policy. The latest chapter in this saga is the establishment of the Central America Free Trade Agreement initiated by the administration of President George W. Bush. The agreement is intended to establish a free trade zone covering the United States, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. However, the fear of loss of jobs and of the commitment to an area often hostile to American economic power led to considerable opposition to Bush's proposals. There was particularly strong opposition from sugar producers in the United States who feared an influx of cheap sugar from Central America. When the legislation necessary to implement the Agreement was introduced in Congress in 2005 it was by no means certain that it would pass. As with NAFTA there was opposition both on the left and on the right, from the trades unions to the John Birch Society. The Bush administration engaged in an unprecedented operation to persuade Congressmen to their point of view. President Bush and Vice-President Cheney met with members of Congress to urge them to vote for the measure. The *Washington Post* reported that 'so many top Bush administration officials were working the Capitol ... that Democrats joked that the hallways looked like a Cabinet meeting.' In the event the Bill was passed by the House of Representatives by a majority of only two votes, and only because fifteen Democrats joined the Republican majority to offset the twenty-seven Republicans who voted against.

The proposal to open the markets of Central American countries to United States producers caused as much controversy in those countries, if not more, as opening up the United States to them had caused in that country.

The fear was that CAFTA would benefit United States multinational companies at the expense of Central American farmers and small businesses. Although by the beginning of April 2006, eight months after President Bush had signed the legislation, Costa Rica was the only country which had not ratified the agreement, only three of the six Central American countries – El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua – had fully implemented it. The US trade initiative in Central America reawakened opposition in South America to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the attempt to create a free trade area for the whole Western hemisphere. This had begun at the Summit of the Americas, held in 1994 in Miami. At that time thirty-four governments signed a declaration, urged on by President Clinton, agreeing that a free trade area would be established by 2005. Progress, however, was slow and the aim was not achieved. Despite President Bush's continued support, a number of the original thirty-four countries have expressed opposition, led by President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. In November 2005 at a meeting of the Summit of the Americas, Chavez attacked US policy and supported anti-Bush demonstrations. For the time being, at least, the FTAA and American international trade policy in South America are stalled.

### American exceptionalism

Every nation follows the path it considers best suits its interests and the United States cannot be blamed for doing the same. However, in recent years, the course of American policy in a number of areas has seemed to emphasise the determination of the administration of George W. Bush to act unilaterally and to reject the restraints that other nations have accepted – the decision to withdraw from both the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, and the refusal to accept the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Although American presidents have found ways around the Constitution's requirement that treaties with foreign nations should be subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, there are situations in which it cannot be avoided in practice. These are agreements which have significant *internal* consequences, and which would require congressional action for their implementation; such was the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. This agreement was intended to stabilise carbon emissions as a way of beginning to reduce the impact of global warming, which was perceived to be a serious threat to the future of the planet. It was signed by over 160 countries, including the United States, but it would not be binding on a member country until that country had ratified the Protocol. Even before the negotiation of the agreement the US Senate had passed a resolution, by ninety-five votes to nil, stating that the United States should not enter into any agreement which was not binding on developing as well as industrialised countries, or which 'would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States'. Although Vice-President Al Gore signed the agreement, President Clinton did not submit it to the

Senate for ratification. The objections to the agreement centred on the cost of implementing it and the possible consequences to the economy because of the need to adopt restrictions on industry which would affect its competitive position, a view shared by Democrats and Republicans alike. George W. Bush made it clear soon after his election that he did not intend to submit the treaty to the Senate. He stated:

Kyoto is, in many ways, unrealistic. Many countries cannot meet their Kyoto targets. The targets themselves were arbitrary and not based upon science. For America, complying with those mandates would have a negative economic impact, with layoffs of workers and price increases for consumers. And when you evaluate all these flaws, most reasonable people will understand that it's not sound public policy.

Bush did not deny the reality of global warming, but he questioned the ways of achieving the stabilisation of greenhouse gases: 'I've asked my advisors to consider approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including those that tap the power of markets, help realize the promise of technology and ensure the widest-possible global participation.' However, his administration was criticised for throwing doubt on the extent to which carbon emissions are responsible for global warming, and was even accused of doctoring scientific reports on the subject. Although the Bush administration has come closer to acknowledging the need for action to limit global warming there is little likelihood that its position on Kyoto will change significantly, and even less that the Senate would ratify the treaty if asked to do so. However, a number of the states have declared that they will adopt Kyoto-like policies to limit carbon emissions. In 2003 California passed legislation requiring the state Air Resources Board to 'develop and adopt regulations that achieve the maximum feasible and cost-effective reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles.'

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was concluded in 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was intended to limit the systems used by the defences of both countries against nuclear attack. It remained in force for thirty years, until in 2002, after giving the appropriate notice, the United States withdrew from the treaty. The reason for taking this unusual step was, in the words of President Bush:

Today, our security environment is profoundly different. The Cold War is over. The Soviet Union no longer exists. Russia is not an enemy, but in fact is increasingly allied with us on a growing number of critically important issues . . . Today, the United States and Russia face new threats to their security. Principal among these threats are weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means wielded by terrorists and rogue states. A number of such states are acquiring increasingly longer-range ballistic missiles as instruments of blackmail and coercion against the