It's a great pleasure to be here. Stanford is one of the great places to study international relations, international politics and international history, so I'm delighted to have this opportunity.

I'm going to talk today about 9/11 and its impact on American foreign policy. Throughout my career, I actually have rarely talked about contemporary issues, but last year when I was at Oxford, I was planning to give my big inaugural address at the end of the year. At Oxford everything is a little bit backward, but this is one big lecture you give at the end of the year, and I had planned to give a lecture on my views of the dynamics of the Cold War which is a topic that I've spent a lot of time working on for many, many years, and I'm writing a new book actually on that topic right now, but being in England last year and reading the European press, I could not help but become extraordinarily immersed in the dynamics of the contemporary scene.

Almost every single day at Oxford, I was asked to explain, usually defend, American foreign policy, and the experience made me very uncomfortable, sufficiently uncomfortable that I decided under the pressure of my wife to sort of think more seriously about contemporary foreign policy and to put it in historical perspective. She told me, anyway, that no one's interested in the Cold War anymore, in any case, and that therefore, why not talk about 9/11 and its impact on foreign policy.

I gave a talk on that at the end of the year, and I've continued to sort of think about it in a serious way, and I do so because I think the issues are profoundly
important and that the situation is profoundly difficult, the issues that have been generated by 9/11 and the engagement in Iraq are serious, serious issues that pose enormous problems for which I think there are no real easy answers.

But since the Bush Administration presented a national strategy statement in September 2002, literally the week I arrived at Oxford, the Bush Administration has laid out sort of its own agenda, its own view of how to approach American foreign policy, primarily in the aftermath of 9/11. And it's made me think very extensively about the degrees to which there are continuities and/or discontinuities.

Interestingly, both the critiques of the Administration and the proponents of the Administration seem to have vested interest in saying that there has been dramatic change. The proponents of the Administration, members of the Administration, believe that by saying that there's been dramatic change that they appear bold and creative and imaginative. Critics, on the other hand, want to claim that the Administration is provocative, adventurous, imprudent in ways perhaps that the Clinton Administration had not been, or other more liberal Democratic Administrations had not been in the past.

My argument today places the emphasis on continuity rather than on change. Bush's most dramatic actions and his rhetorical pronouncements, however inelegant, have deep roots, very deep roots, in the history of American foreign policy. Understanding these roots is important because they help us to illuminate the different trajectories that inhere in the American diplomatic experience. The possession of immense power and the belief in a universal mission have the potential to produce great good and great harm. And given this dynamic mix of power and ideals, there's no substitute, I think, for good judgment.

Now, while stressing continuities, I do not deny that there has been important change. Change, however, doesn't constitute a revolution, as many commentators think there has been. The change that I see constitutes a recalibration in the complicated interaction between the assessment of threat, the calculation of interest, the enunciation of values, and the mobilization of power. In the history of American foreign policy, threats, interests, ideals and power have always had a dynamic and changing relationship to one another. I would suggest, my argument is that at times of heightened threat perception, the assertion of values mounts, and subsumes careful calculation of interests. Values and ideals are asserted to help evoke support, public support for the mobilization of power. Power, then, tempts the government to overreach far beyond what careful calculation of interest might dictate.
The genius of American foreign policy is the capacity to recalibrate relationships between these variables. The nightmare of American foreign policy is that the relationships between these variables forever remain in flux, subject to evolving perceptions of threat.

So, first, let me begin by explaining why I think American foreign policy is not revolutionary, why I think American foreign policy post-9/11 is not revolutionary. I use as my guide Bush's national security strategy statement. I think it's perfectly justifiable to rely on this statement because if you read the subsequent documents of the Bush Administration, you will see that virtually every single document has been prepared to conform precisely with this national strategy statement of September 2002.

Now, what does the strategy statement advocate? Its critics, as you know, tend to focus on preemption, unilateralism, and military hegemony. I will get to these factors in a moment because they are the most important ones, but at the same time, one should not overlook the fact that Bush national security strategy focuses on more than preemption, unilateralism and hegemony. In fact, the strategy statement affirms very traditional goals. Quote "Political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states and respect for individual dignity." In fact, the overriding goal of the national security strategy statement is to create an international order that favors freedom. The United States, and I'm quoting, "must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people." End quote.

Now, the path towards this overriding goal is spelled out in the subsections of the National Security Strategy paper. The United States, and I'm quoting "must strengthen alliances to defeat terrorism, work with others to diffuse regional conflicts, prevent our enemies from threatening us and our allies with weapons of mass destruction." The United States must, quote, "ignite a new era of global economic growth through free trade and free markets. The United States must expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy." The United States must develop, quote, "agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power."

If you read this agenda alone, it would be hard to make a claim that there was anything revolutionary about Bush foreign policy. Think of the open door notes of 1899 and 1900, the Fourteen Points, Wilson's speeches during World War I, the Atlantic Charter and even part of the Truman Doctrine. More recently you might compare the Bush National Security agenda to the last mission statement of Clinton's Department of State, the aim of which, quote "was to create a more secure prosperous and democratic world for the benefit of the American people." Unquote.
To achieve this task, the Clinton team laid out their own agenda. First, quote, "secure peace, deter aggression, prevent and diffuse and manage regional crises. Second, alter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, expand exports, open markets, assist American business, foster economic growth, promote sustainable world development, protect American citizens abroad and safeguard American borders, combat international terrorism, support the establishment and consolidation of democracies, provide humanitarian assistance, improve the global environment, stabilize world population growth, and protect human health.

The generalizations, I would argue, are remarkably similar, the continuities compelling, notwithstanding different emphases on arms control and the environment. But of course, the devil is in the details.

What appears revolutionary in Bush's National strategy statement is the dismissal of deterrence, alliance formation, multilateralism and containment, in favor of a strategy of preemption, prevention, unilateralism and hegemony — military hegemony.

Deterrence, insists the Bush strategy statement, will not suffice against rogue states and terrorists. Terrorists seek to target innocents, they seek martyrdom, their most potent protection, the strategy statement says, is statelessness. Hence, the need, and I'm quoting, "to adopt the concept, to adapt the concept of imminent threat, to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversary, hence the need for preemptive, one might even call it, preventative action. The greater is the threat, asserts the strategy statement, the greater is the risk of inaction, and the more compelling is the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains to the time and place of the enemy attack."

Now, a great deal has been made of this statement. Preemption, along with the willingness to act unilaterally and maintain military preponderance, constitute the case for a transformative, revolutionary foreign policy. The Bush National strategy statement, writes James Mann, sets forth an entirely new agenda of ideas and principles. Quote, "They were deliberately choosing to create a new conception of American foreign policy, just as the Truman Administration had constructed a new framework of ideas and institutions at the beginning of the Cold War."

In addition to the preemption doctrine, Mann and others, James Mann and others emphasize the Bush team's determination to build and configure forces, quote "strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from surpassing or equaling the power of the United States."
Now, none of this strikes me as revolutionary. Preemptive military action is not new. When Theodore Roosevelt justified intervention in the Caribbean and Central America, it was explicitly a preemptive form of intervention, indeed, protective imperialism is what Samuel Flagg Bemis, one of the nation's foremost diplomatic historians called it a half-century ago, protective imperialism. The point was to use military force to intervene, to establish order and to preclude European powers from having any excuse for inserting their own forces on America's periphery.

Actually, when you think about it, this was more than preemption. The use of force was explicitly preventative, because there was no imminent threat to American security.

In 1941, Theodore Roosevelt's distant cousin also justified preemptive, or more precisely, preventative use of force. After an American destroyer was attacked by Nazi submarines, President Roosevelt distorted the circumstances surrounding the incident and announced, "This is the time for prevention of attack." Thereafter he said, German and Italian submarines traversing the North Atlantic would do so, "at their own peril." In a Fireside Chat to the American people, Roosevelt explained his thinking. "When you see a rattlesnake posed to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him."

Hitler, of course, was not about to declare war on the United States, but Roosevelt saw a looming threat and decided to take preventative action. The time for active defense, Roosevelt said, quote, "is now."

Preemptive, preventative and unilateralist strategies and tactics were not abandoned during the Cold War. Of course, they were not always the strategy of choice. There were always options, just as they are today. If you read the Bush Strategy closely, you'll see that it states, "The United States will not use force in all cases to prevent emerging threats. Nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression."

Condi Rice and Colin Powell have stated many times that preemption is not a favorite policy. The New Mission Statement, just published, of the Department of States says, "We will strive to strengthen traditional alliances, but when necessary we will act alone. The history of American foreign policy, the Mission Statement of the State Department says, "The history of American foreign policy suggests that we will increase our chances of success abroad by exerting principled leadership, while seeking to work with others to achieve our goals."

This language actually accords with the thinking of the officials who waged the Cold War. Although many writers want to believe that the Cold War signified the heyday of multi-lateralism collaboration and deterrence, this should not
blind us to the presence of unilateralists and preventative options whenever it was deemed advantageous to choose them. The wise men of the Truman Administration worked brilliantly to forge alliances, but they never, ever foreswore the right to act unilaterally.

Eisenhower and Dulles recognized this fact. They sought solidarity with America's allies. In fact, they wrote guidelines into their major national strategy statement, for the maintenance of alliance cohesion. But they also emphasized that the United States, and I'm quoting, "that the United States should act independently of its major allies when the advantage of achieving U.S. objectives by such action clearly outweighs the danger of lasting damages to alliances. Consideration should be given to the likelihood that the initiation of action by the United States prior to allied acceptance may bring subsequent allied support. Allied reluctance to act should not inhibit the United States from taking action, including the use of nuclear weapons, to prevent communist territorial gains when such action is clearly necessary to U.S. security."

Now during the Eisenhower years, there was a conscious rejection of preventative action against the Soviet Union, but there was a readiness to adopt the bold unilateralist, even preventative options, elsewhere should it seem necessary and should it seem desirable to do so.

This was particularly the case when Eisenhower pondered the strategic principles for dealing with quote, "local communist aggression," which of course included civil wars and indigenous strife. While prudently rejecting intervention in 1954, Eisenhower and Dulles nonetheless insisted that the United States should preserve the flexibility and capability to defeat local aggression, hopefully without initiating general war. "The United States," they resolved, "must be determined to take unilaterally if necessary whatever additional action its security requires, even to the extent of general war, and the Communists need to be convinced of this determination."

Now, Eisenhower and Dulles definitely did not want to become locked in another land war in Asia, but they explicitly reserved the option of preventative military action against Communist China. They stated in one of their national security documents that it was the policy of the United States, "to reduce the power of Communist China in Asia, even at the risk of, but without deliberately provoking war."

In other words, in response to local emergencies, the United States might choose to employ force in the wider region. But this remained an option, never a foregone conclusion.
Eisenhower agreed with Dulles when the Secretary of State insisted during one National Security Council discussion that he "did not wish to see the United States become involved in a major war where public opinion, where world public opinion, would be wholly against the United States because that," Dulles said, "was the kind of war you lose."

Preventative war against the Soviet Union was dismissed, because it was deemed impractical, indeed, because it was deemed suicidal. At a National Security Council meeting very shortly before he was assassinated, President Kennedy asked, "where it even if we attack the USSR first, the loss to the U.S. would be unacceptable to America's political leaders."

And General Leon Johnson responded to this by telling the President: Even if we preempt, surviving Soviet capability is sufficient to produce an unacceptable loss to the United States.

Probing further, Kennedy inquired, "What about preempt today with the Soviets in a low state of alert?"

This time, Secretary of Defense McNamara replied: "In the many studies I've had done for me," he told Kennedy, "I've not found a situation in which a preempt during a low-alert situation would be advantageous. Under no circumstances," said McNamara, "have I been able to get American casualties under 30 million. They can destroy us with a few weapons and we can do the same. Therefore, preempt is not advantageous for either side."

But this didn't mean that preemptive or preventative military actions were foresworn. It simply meant that Kennedy would not use them against the Soviet homeland.

At the very same time that he was confirming that preventative war against Soviet Russia was suicidal, President Kennedy and his top advisors pondered preventative military action against the Chinese nuclear threat. Kennedy felt that "this was probably the most serious problem facing the world today. We should be prepared," he thought, "to take some form of action," and I'm quoting, "on which they agreed to desist from further efforts in this field." Kennedy wanted to ascertain the Kremlin's views about, "limiting or preventing Chinese nuclear development."

Specifically, Kennedy wanted to find out of Khrushchev might "take Soviet action, or accept U.S. action aimed in this direction."

Now, after Kennedy's death, intelligence analysts and East Asian experts convinced President Johnson and his National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy that China's acquisition of nuclear capabilities would not endanger vital
U.S. interests. Consequently, they exerted good judgment. They did not employ preventative force directly against China or the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations did adopt unilateralist, preventative measures in relation to other perceived threats. The most conspicuous case, of course, was the deployment of force to blockade Cuba in October 1962. But Johnson's decisions to send troops to the Dominican Republic and to deploy forces to Indochina were preventative in nature, although we don't often think of them that way. But we should, if we wish to place Bush national security properly in historical perspective.

In thinking about Cuba, in thinking about the Dominican Republic, in thinking about Indochina, Kennedy's and Johnson's best and brightest advisors embraced the notion that the United States should be prepared to take preventative initiatives to counter a looming threat. The Bundys, Rusk and McNamara would not have disputed the language of the Bush National strategy statement, "The greater the threat, the greater the risk of inaction and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack."

When they perceive threats, especially in the Third World, U.S. officials during the Cold War did not refrain from acting unilaterally. Against French and British advice, they moved ahead with their Vietnam venture, more or less unilaterally. Their thinking was preventative. They had to prevent dominoes from falling. They knew they were acting according to the dictates of their own assumptions at a particularly excruciating moment in the decision-making process, Johnson exclaimed to McGeorge Bundy, "What in the hell am I ordering our kids to Indochina? What in the hell is Vietnam worth to me? What the hell is Laos worth to me? We've got a treaty, but hell, everybody else has got a treaty, and they're not doing a damn thing."

But then Johnson stepped back, significantly, and he reflected, "of course, if you start running from the Communists, they'll chase you right into your own kitchen."

And one should remember that although Johnson and his advisors were subsequently excoriated for poor judgment in estimating the nature of the threat and in deploying force, it was not the unilateralism that bothered opponents. Long before Vietnam was a controversial issue tearing the nation apart, George Kennan wrote a letter to Walt Rostow, then the head of the Policy Planning staff. "Insofar as problems of security are concerned," Kennan wrote, "I am skeptical of the utility of collective and multilateral arrangements. I suspect we lose more by such arrangements in the way of promptness of flexibility of action and privacy of decision than we gain in the way of added military and political resources."
Cold Warriors who advised Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson have objected to the Bush Administration's determination to maintain military superiority. Cold Warriors knew that deterrence might fail. They particularly knew that the principles of deterrence did not apply very well to insurgencies and unrest in the Third World. They, too, wanted to build forces to ensure that no adversary could impose its will on the United States. The United States, they agreed, must never allow itself to be, "blackmailed," a favorite term, by the way, of the Bush Administration.

No enemy or potential enemy should be allowed to acquire comparable power. Paul Nitze, the most representative Cold Warrior, from Truman through Reagan, wrote in 1950 the following: "The world affairs are fluid. One side will gain. The other will decline. It must be our objective to be the one who gains. The United States and Soviet Union are engaged in a struggle for preponderant power. To seek less than preponderant power would be to opt for defeat. Preponderant power must be the objective of U.S. policy.

Nitze's successors in the Eisenhower Administration embraced this idea and actually wrote it into their major National Security Council paper. They acknowledged that "the nuclear balance was unlikely to create a permanent stalemate. Therefore, a sustained effort must be made to invent and develop capabilities which will provide decisive preponderance to U.S. power."

Now, Cold Warriors did not seek preponderant power because they contemplated a preemptive or preventative attack on the Soviet Union. As indicated, they knew that such an idea was suicidal. Preponderant power was a means to support a risk-taking, often unilateralist diplomacy, aimed at maximizing situations of strength. Containment, Nitze emphasized, was not a defensive, reactive strategy. Containment was coercive diplomacy. Governments needed strength to cast shadows and buttress their diplomacy. Governments needed strength to dominate the escalatory process in crises situations.

Even after the Soviets achieved nuclear parity, for example, we now know that Nixon and Kissinger worked tenaciously to readjust war planning and develop, "politically meaningful threats."

Cold Warriors, like the men surrounding George Bush, believe that the United States should try to prevent adversaries from surpassing or equaling the power of the United States. This principle is as traditional as apple pie.

Nor did strategic attitudes change after the Cold War. When the elder Bush departed from office, Clinton and his advisors did not reverse course. In fact, America's military superiority grew. By the late 1990s, the United States was
spending more money on arms than practically all the rest of the world combined. This was not accidental. It was explicit policy formulation. In their strategy paper, Clinton's advisors made it clear that in order to respond to the full spectrum of threats, they needed, the United States needed to have the best trained, best equipped and most effective armed forces in the world. The forces needed to be mobile. They needed to be agile. To deploy them effectively, the U.S. had to have the best technology in the world.

In fact, the vision statement of Clinton's Joint Chiefs of Staff was breathtaking in its ambitions: "The overall goal is the creation of a force that is dominant across the full spectrum of military operations, persuasive in peace, decisive in war, preeminent in any form of conflict."

Now, ostensibly, these military capabilities were for deterrence, but deterrence was entwined with compliance. Efforts to deter an adversary, according to the Clinton team, "can become the leading edge of crisis response. In this sense, deterrence straddles the line between shaping the international environment and responding to crises."

The Joint Chiefs made the same point. In public speeches and congressional testimony, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright talked eloquently about cooperating with America's allies, much as did President Bush, in England last year. But the strategy of the Clinton Administration preserved the right to act unilaterally, and to strike preemptively. The United States, Clinton's National Security advisor stated, had vital interests. These included the physical security of the American homeland and the territory of our allies; the physical safety of American citizens at home and abroad; the protection of our infrastructure; and the protection against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"We will do what we must," said the Clinton National Security team, "to defend these vital interests. This may involve the use of military force including unilateral action where deemed necessary or appropriate."

In fact, Clinton already had approved the option of preemptive action. In June 1995, Clinton signed a Presidential Directive No. 35 regarding counter-terrorism. Much of this directive is still classified, but the redacted version is suggestive. The United States, it says, regards terrorism as a potential threat to national security, and the United States will apply all appropriate means to combat it. In doing so, the United States shall pursue vigorously efforts to deter and preempt, apprehend and prosecute, or assist other governments to prosecute, other individuals who perpetrate or plan to perpetrate such attacks.
The policy directive went on to say that the United States "would identify groups or states that support terrorists, isolate them and extract a heavy price for their actions."

As I said, much of this document is still classified, but it does not take a whole lot of imagination to see that the Administration contemplated covert and overt military action, sometimes to prevent and sometimes to preempt. Toward the end of the document in a section on weapons of mass destruction, the policy directive states: "The acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist group is unacceptable. There is no higher priority than preventing the acquisition of this capability from terrorist groups potentially opposed to the United States."

These statements are followed by a redacted page, denied in full, and one can imagine the options that were enumerated.

In their last strategy statement, Clinton's advisors again make clear that they supported preemptive action. The threat emanating from the nexus of terrorists, rogue states and weapons of mass destruction was, indeed, terrifying. We make no concessions to terrorists, the Clinton team declared. Whenever possible we use law enforcement, diplomatic and economic tools to wage fight against terrorism, but there have been and there will be times when these tools are not enough. As long as terrorists continue to target American citizens, we reserve the right to act in self-defense by striking at their bases and those who sponsor, assist or actively support them.

Sandy Berger, Clinton's National Security Advisor, recently testified that Clinton was prepared to take preemptive action if it could be determined that such action would be effective. In 2000, Berger said, the President ordered two new nuclear submarines to deploy off the coast of Pakistan for additional missile strikes, and we were ready to use them at a moment's notice had reliable intelligence materialized on bin Laden's whereabouts. Nor was the President, according to Berger, averse to putting boots on the ground. Clinton asked his military advisors to study those options, but given Pakistani opposition, the absence of a useable nearby base in Afghanistan and the paucity of timely intelligence, Clinton's military leadership, said Berger, concluded that such a mission would likely fail.

The point of the foregoing is to underscore the considerable continuities in strategic thinking and policies. Seeking preponderance is not new. Reserving the right to act unilaterally is not new. During the Cold War, policy makers adroitly and skillfully formed alliances and held them together, but they never foreclosed the right to act unilaterally and often did so. Unilateralism is quintessentially American, and when the Cold War ended, temptations to act unilaterally multiplied, often infuriating our allies. Clinton sometimes,
frequently, worked diligently to contain and co-opt unilateralist pressures, but he, too, recognized that unilateralism was not only politically expedient inside the United States, but might be strategically imperative.

As the threats of terrorism, WMD proliferation and rogue and failed states escalated throughout the '90s, most members of the policy-making community in the United States, whether rightly or wrongly, came to believe that notwithstanding the desirability of alliance cohesion, and even alliance expansion, the United States would find itself having to act unilaterally. Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney were not members of the bipartisan U.S. Commission on National Security in the 21st Century. This commission was appointed by Clinton. It was chaired by Warren Rudman and Gary Hart and included Les Gelb and Lee Hamilton, as well as Jim Schlesinger and Newt Gingrich.

Among its findings was the following: The United States will increasingly find itself wishing to form coalitions but increasingly unable to find partners willing and able to carry out combined military operations. Hence, the need to ponder unilateralist solutions.

Now, while there's little that is revolutionary about Bush foreign policy, change has occurred. This has to do with the balance between interests and ideals, when threat perception if high. What is noteworthy about Bush foreign policy is how values and ideals have trumped interest, how great military power has shaped policy, how risk-taking has overcome prudence. In a provocative little book, *Paradise and Power*, Robert Kagan argues that disparities in military capability shape strategic culture. Strong powers, Kagan says, naturally view the world differently. They measure risks and threats differently. They define security differently. And they have different levels of tolerance for insecurity. Those with great military power are more likely to consider force a useful tool of international relations, rather than those who have little military power. The stronger, Kagan says, may in fact rely on force more than they should.

But the reliance on force is most of all a function of threat perception. 9/11 transformed threat perception. For years, intelligence analysts warned of terrorism. Year after year, if you read the testimony of the directors of the Central Intelligence Agency to Congress, you'll see that they warned about the threats emanating from terrorism and proliferation of WMD. Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Wolfowitz, and Rice grasped the threat, but underestimated its imminence and its urgency. 9/11 shocked them and revolutionized their sense of American vulnerability. I'd go even further. I would suggest that on a deep and very elemental level, they feel a combination of guilt, outrage and responsibility.
9/11, said Condi Rice, crystallized our vulnerability. "No less than Pearl Harbor September 11 forever changed the strategic perspective of the United States."

After 9/11, Rice said, the country faced an existential threat as great as any in its history, as great as the Civil War, World War I or World War II.

We've seen on September 11, said Paul Wolfowitz, a glimpse of how terrible the world will be when existing capabilities are magnified by weapons of mass destruction. For 20 years, Wolfowitz continued, we lived with his hovering threat, but it's not possible, he said, to live with it anymore. September 11 changed everything. We have a visceral understanding of what terrorists can do with commercial aircraft in a way that seemed remote and hypothetical before. We cannot afford to wait until we have a visceral understanding of what terrorists can do with weapons of mass destruction.

In another interview, Wolfowitz's boss amplified the concerns. The question of the 21st century, Rumsfeld explained, is what to do with terrorists who might possess weapons that, "could kill hundreds of thousands of people. Does one wait until their attack or does one look at a fact pattern and draw a conclusion? What thresholds of risk must one accept? Three thousand lives have been lost on September 11." Should one wait, Rumsfeld queried, until another attack occurred, perhaps a biological attack, with three hundred thousand deaths?

Having failed to put the dots together, threat perceptions impelled an offensive strategy. Rumsfeld acknowledged, "The coalition did not act in Iraq because we had discovered dramatic new evidence of Iraq's pursuit of weapons of mass murder. We acted because we saw the existing evidence in a new light, through the prism of our experience on September 11."

That prism demanded boldness. "History will judge harshly," President Bush said, "those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we've entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action."

Threat perception then impelled defensive strategies, but it did more than that. Threat perception elevated a discourse of values and ideals. Like other times in American history, when threat perception has been high, policy makers gravitate to rhetorical strategies, emphasizing ideas, ideals and values. Conversely, when threat perception is low, officials tend to dwell on the pursuit of interests rather than ideals.

Many of the great rhetorical speeches of the last century focused on the pursuit of ideals in times of crisis. Wilson's speeches during World War I, Roosevelt's addresses and Fireside Chats in 1940 and '41, Truman's messages during the Korean War, Kennedy's evocative rhetoric during the Berlin and Cuban crises,
and Reagan's rhetorical fervor after the invasion of Afghanistan and the shoot-
down of the Korean civilian airliner.

But when threats are low, rhetoric if more prosaic. Public speeches about foreign
policy and national security are much more infrequent, and the engagement with
interests, interestingly, much more pronounced.

As the Cold War ended, for example, in 1991, the strategy statement of this
president's father noted that the prevailing strategic environment in the early '90s
was much more like the 1920s than the 1940s. Then, too, "The great threat to our
interests had collapsed and no comparable threat was evident." Fearing that the
United States might turn inward, the senior Bush, along with his national
security advisers, stressed that the United States needed to adopt a strategic
posture that would preserve American strength. Such an approach, they
emphasized, quote "begins with an understanding of our basic interests and
objectives." There was little focus on ideals or values.

Indeed, throughout the '90s, Clinton and his advisors sought to reconcile
interests and ideals. But claiming that the Democrats were steering the country
in the wrong direction, Condi Rice emphasized during the 2000 presidential
campaign that "American foreign policy in a Republican administration should
refocus the United States on the national interests and the pursuit of clear-cut
priorities. Power matters," Rice boldly declared, "but power should not be
employed for second order effects like the enhancement of humanity's well-
being." The challenge was to define interests in a concrete way and to assume
that freedom, democracy, and peace would follow from the calculated pursuit of
interests.

Bush agreed. In his most major foreign policy speech during the presidential
campaign, he said that the United States must do more than manage crises. The
United States must assert its values. It must possess a vision. This is
accomplished, Bush then emphasized, quote "by concentrating on enduring
national interests."

It's striking, therefore, to see the changes in the Administration's thinking, and
the changes in their rhetorical strategies after 9/11. The overall goal of American
policy, says the Bush strategy statement of September 2002, is to configure a
balance of power favoring freedom. "Our principles," it says, "not our interests
will guide our government's decisions." The national strategy of the United
States must start "from core beliefs and look outward for possibilities to expand
liberty."

More clarity, Bush said, is essential. Our struggle, he told the graduating class at
West Point in June 2002, is similar to the Cold War. "Now is then," he said. "Our
enemies are totalitarians, holding power with no place for human dignity. Now, as then, they seek to impose a joyless conformity. Leaders must not shy away from the language of right and wrong. Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, in every place. There can be no neutrality," said Bush, “between justice and cruelty, between innocence and the guilty. We are in conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes, we do not create a problem. We reveal a problem.”

Now, we might be tempted to think this is just rhetoric, but it's much more than rhetoric. It reflects conviction, conviction inspired by the events of 9/11. "Freedom," Bush told Bob Woodward in his new book, "is not America's gift to the world. It's God's gift to everybody in the world. I believe that. As a matter of fact," Bush said, "I was the person who wrote that line. I didn't write it actually. I said it in a speech. And it's become part of the jargon, and I believe it, and I believe we have a duty to free people. I would hope we wouldn't have to do it militarily, but we do have a duty."

The rhetoric is significant, all the more because it infuses the thinking of the men who run the Pentagon, with great pride, and even greater conviction. Rumsfeld noted that President Bush, like President Reagan, has not shied from calling evil by its name. Nor has Bush been shy, said Rumsfeld, about "declaring his intention to defeat evil's latest incarnation, terrorism, just as free men and women of all political persuasions defeated fascism and communism abroad."

Like the Cold War, declared Defense Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, like the Cold War, the global war on terrorism is also a war of ideas and it promises like President Kennedy said, to be a long, twilight struggle.

"The advance of freedom," insists Defense Undersecretary Douglas Fife, must be the calling of our time. The advance of freedom must be the calling of our country."

Interestingly, across the Potomac, the rhetoric of idealism and the force of values have also cast its shadows. The New Mission Statement of the Department of State, just published, begins, "American diplomacy in the 21st century is based on fundamental beliefs. Our freedom is best protected by ensuring that others are free and our security relies on a global effort to secure the rights of all. The history of the American people is the chronicle of our efforts to live up to our ideals."

Now, some listeners might feel that this focus on values and ideals is refreshing and inspiring. Some may feel that it's innocuous, yet ennobling. Some may think that it's purely instrumental, rationalizations to arise public support and sacrifices to dangers the public would wish to avoid. Some actually may be
amused that scholars like myself take this rhetoric seriously. My point, though, is that the rhetoric reflects a vast change in the public persona of the Bush Administration, after 9/11. It reflects a heightened level of threat perception. It signifies an evolution from assertive nationalism to democratic imperialism. It justifies and inspires the employment of unprecedented power. It's a very worrisome development.

The analogies to the Cold War are instructive, and I think much less reassuring than Bush and his advisors think. Memory is very important in decision-making. We all know that decision-makers make use of the lessons of the past. The present Administration is enamored with the lessons of the Reagan Administration. Power, they believed, harnessed to ideals vanquished evil. Reagan's talk of democracy and good versus evil, said Douglas Fife, the Defense Undersecretary, Reagan's talk was widely criticized, even ridiculed as unsophisticated, but it's now widely understood as having contributed importantly to the greatest strategic victory in world history—the collapse of Soviet communism.

President Bush embraces this view. "Reagan," he declared, "is a hero in the American story, a story in which a single individual shaped history, a story in which evil is real, but courage and decency triumphed."

Yet, if we think of the full course of the Cold War, we should have very different lessons competing with the lessons of the Reagan years. The greatest successes of the Cold War, the initiatives that were most decisive in the long twilight struggle actually came in its early years. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine, George Kennan, Dean Atcheson, Jack McCloy and their associates carefully calibrated interests. They focused on reconstructing and co-opting Western Germany, Western Europe and Japan. They constrained military expenditures. They assigned priority to economic reconstruction.

The delicate balance between threat perception, the definition of interests, and the employment of power actually changed in 1950. The Soviet acquisition of the bomb, the fall of China, the signing of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, the North Korean attack on South Korea, and the involvement of China in the Korean War accentuated the perception of threat. Indeed, these events institutionalized the hyperbolic language of NSC-68, and inaugurated a full-scale war on communism everywhere.

Eisenhower and Dulles we now know were more nuanced than we once thought, but their rhetoric calling on nations to take sides was a precursor of the rhetoric we hear today. The war against communism blurred important distinctions and distorted priorities. Defining policy in terms of good versus evil made it difficult to grasp the nature of revolutionary nationalism. Moral clarity distorted and
delayed our capacity to exploit the Sino-Soviet rift and embroiled us in a war in Vietnam, a war that our allies like Britain and France warned us against.

The quest for moral clarity can lead to an arrogance of power, as Senator Fulbright said long ago. The quest for moral clarity can lead, does lead, to abuses of power. The quest for moral clarity can obfuscate our definition of interests. Indeed, even in the Reagan years moral clarity and the employment of power may not have been nearly as important as the attraction of soft power, the role of Western popular culture, the role of nongovernmental organizations and the appeal of democratic socialism in Europe.

What then, in conclusion, are the appropriate lessons to be learned from the past? Heightened threat perception tempts U.S. officials to stake their policy on the universality and superiority of American values. Heightened threat perception tempts officials to obfuscate interests and to dwell on ideals. Yet, a careful calculation of interests is essential to discipline American power and to temper our ethnocentrism. There is no greater and sadder irony, perhaps even tragedy, that while Bush officials assert the superiority of American values, the overweening use of American power breeds cynicism about our motives and distrust of our intentions.

A recent survey of world public opinion by the Pew Research Center revealed shocking results. Large majorities of people in countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Jordan, and Morocco believe that the United States ignores their interests. Large majorities believe that the United States seeks to dominate the world. Most suspect that the underlying motive is control of Middle Eastern oil. So strong is antipathy that overwhelming majorities of people in Jordan and Morocco view suicide attacks on Americans and other Westerners in Iraq as justifiable. Osama bin Laden is looked upon favorably by 65 percent of Pakistanis, 55 percent of Jordanians, and 45 percent of Moroccans. The stature and reputation of Americans in the world, especially in the Islamic world, and particularly after the recent revelations, have never been lower.

The balance between ideals and interests has been dangerously skewed in favor of the former, and the result is an ominous over assertion of American power. There has been no revolution in American foreign policy. There has been a frightening recalibration of the relationships between ideals and interests in the face of what Condi Rice called "existential threats." There is an imperative need for rethinking this balance. Interests need to temper ideals and discipline power. This does not require a revolution in thinking. It requires the exercise of good judgment. Thank you.