Diplomacy, Alliances and War: Anglo-American Perspectives on History and Strategy in the September 11th Era

A Joint University of Texas-Austin and King's College London Conference

Driskill Keynote

Keynote Speaker: Michael Gerson

November 1, 2013 | 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM
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[Note to Reader: When possible, speakers are identified by first name. If not, then Respondent is used for panelists and discusssants, and Audience is used for attendees.]

[Begin File: Driskill Keynote.mp3]

Moderator: Excuse me. Excuse me — if I can have your attention. Pardon the interruption as you're finishing up the delicious Texas beef or Texas Gulf snapper. Before the evening gets too far away from us, I wanted to introduce our special dinner speaker or after-dinner speaker, as it may be. This is a particular honor for me, because our speaker has been a long-time friend of mine. It's Mike Gerson. I first met Mike 20 years ago — if you can believe it — in 1993 when I was a college intern in the U.S. Senate and Mike was a senior policy adviser to the senator I was interning for. I had no idea that 10, 12 years later I'd be reunited with Mike at the White House. As a quick aside, the lesson here is: Be nice to your interns, because you might be working with them 15 years later at the White House.

So anyway, Mike comes to us currently from *The Washington Post* where he is a twice-weekly nationally syndicated columnist. He's also a senior adviser to the ONE Campaign, which if any of us here have been to a U2 concert, you know all about the ONE Campaign. For our purposes this evening, I can think of no better person to speak to us about the mentality, the attitudes, the strategy of the Bush administration in the four, five, six years after the 9/11 attacks. Mike joined the Bush presidential campaign very early on. He lived here in Austin for 19 months working for Governor Bush as a speechwriter for the campaign. Once Bush won the election and became President, Mike became assistant to the President for policy and strategic planning and head of the White House speechwriter's office. So unlike other speechwriters who are mere wordsmiths, Mike was also a very active policy leader at the White House, so combining the policy with the prose. He was the author of pretty much every single one of the Bush administrations major national security speeches as well as one of the key architects and member of the Bush administration's humanitarian initiative such as PEPFAR, which we've heard about. So Mike is going to be sharing with us some of his reflections on his time at the White House working for President Bush, particularly on the relationship with the UK, with Prime Minister Blair, and helping us understand some more what it was like being in Washington and the White House during those very consequential days. So while Mike is speaking, they'll be serving some dessert, so please, keep the clinking to a minimum. But enjoy your dessert, and please, join me in giving a warm Texas and King's College welcome to Mike Gerson.

Mike: Thank you so much. Let me start by thanking Will and the Clements Center. It is wonderful to be with so many old friends and colleagues from the Bush administration,

and for the Europeans here tonight, thanks to the NSA, I feel like I know you already. The topic of this conference is the British-American relationship following 9/11, something I saw mainly through the small keyhole of the speechwriting process. But before I get started, let me tell you just a little bit about myself. Speechwriters are supposed to be anonymous, and at this task I've succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. In the spring of 1999 I was a senior editor at *U.S. News & World Report* covering politics, and I got a call from, then, Governor George W. Bush of Texas and wanted to meet me at a hotel in Washington. The first thing he said to me was, "This isn't an interview. I've read your stuff. I want you to write my announcement speech, my convention speech, and my inaugural address. I want you to move to Austin immediately." At that point he was not even a declared candidate, but his confidence was infectious. So I loaded up my family in the car and moved here to Austin.

From the start, we were a little bit of an odd couple. He's outgoing, athletic, likeable, and I'm actually none of those things. He had a penchant for locker room humor that made me uncomfortable. I remember after one policy session at the governor's mansion here in Austin, everyone had gone but me, and the governor had some time before his next appointment. He asked me, "Do you want to hang out a little while?" With a rudeness that now seems crazed, I replied, "Not really," which was not the way to treat a future President. But I came to respect Bush as a politician and as a person. He's casual, and funny, and authentic, and kind, and loyal to the people around him. He can occasionally be sharp-tongued. Every year on the day of the State of the Union address, the President sits down with all the network anchors for some time of question and answer. In one of those sessions, the late Peter Jennings asked him, "What does it feel like to go before the nation and read someone else's words?" The President immediately replied, "You do it every night."

The pace of those years — including 9/11, and the Afghan campaign, and the run-up to Iraq, and the Iraq war, and the counter-insurgency campaign, and Katrina — was at times exhausting. It has a cost to your health. In December of 2004 while working on President Bush's second inaugural address, I had a mild heart attack. The President's doctor had me checked into the hospital under an assumed name to avoid all the press calls. Adding insult to incapacity, there wasn't a single call. It has a cost to your family. During the heat of the 2004 presidential election, my little boy, Nicholas, who was then six years old, announced to me in the car that he wanted John Kerry for President. When I asked him why, he said, "So you can be home on weekends." My nine-year-old was little more practical and said, "But how would we eat?" I told them I think I can get a job. I might go to a think tank. He said, of course, "What's a think tank?" So I told them, "Well, it's people who read, and speak, and have meetings and things." Bucky — and this is true — said, "You mean they don't do anything?"

After the 2004 election, my job at the White House changed. I became a policy adviser focused on global health, development, genocide — some areas where my interests had been leading me for many years. I actually saw something very hopeful. In one of the bitterest times of partisanship in modern history, I found a number of issues where members of both parties and people of every ideology had some common ground. As part of my job at the White House, I worked with conservative and liberal groups on the issue of global aid sent to confront malaria, and to oppose global sex trafficking, and to confront the crisis in Darfur. I've seen some odd alliances grow. I've gotten to know Bono of the rock band U2 a bit over the years. I arranged the first lunch between President Bush and

Bono. Several years ago, he invited me to the first rock concert I had even attended, and it was loud. Soon afterwards, my wife and I had dinner with Bono, who is a very idealistic and principled man. After the dinner, my wife told me, "You may be idealistic and principled, but it would also be nice if you were rich and cool." Now I'm a follower of the ONE Campaign.

I'm a columnist for the *Post*, living under the tyranny of two deadlines a week. I often fill in for my friend, David Brooks, on the *NewsHour* when he's out of town. If David is off, there is actually a PBS union rule that requires the presence of a nerdy moderate on the program. I enjoy my current job, but I find as I get older, the urge to tell political war stories becomes irresistible, and I'm not going to resist tonight. Some of my most vivid moments in government came in the context of the British-American relationship. It didn't, for example, get much better than the state visit to Britain in November of 2003; the arrival by helicopter on the back lawn of Buckingham Palace; the door to my room guarded rather randomly by a five-foot tall model of an Indian elephant; sitting at the state dinner next to Prince Michael of Kent, who looks alarmingly like the reincarnation of Tsar Nicholas II; bagpipes with the port. During my visit, I was assigned a full-time footman named Russell, whom I still miss very much. For you Brits, this is just evidently everyday life, but it still has a power to impress the tourists.

I recall being very nervous about the speech President Bush was going to deliver at the Royal Banqueting Hall at Whitehall Palace on that trip. The British press was rooting for Bush to fail. Crowds were protesting in the streets, and to top it all off, the setting — oddly — was the place where Charles I had been beheaded. But we decided to adopt the Nelson approach. "Never mind the maneuvers; just go straight at them." The speech began by tracing some of the historical roots of American character traits and Bush's character traits, by the way, that the British find uncomfortable. The President said in that speech, quote, "We're sometimes faulted for a naïve faith that liberty can change the world. If that's an error, it began with reading too much John Locke and Adam Smith. Americans have, on occasion, been called moralists who often speak in terms of right and wrong. That zeal has been inspired by examples on this island, by the tireless compassion of Lord Shaftsbury, the righteous courage of Wilberforce, and the firm determination of the Royal Navy over the decades to fight and end the trade in slaves. It's rightly said that Americans are a religious people. That's in part because the Good News was translated by Tyndale, preached by Wesley, lived out in the example of William Booth. At times, Americans are even said to have a Puritan streak, and where might that have come from?" This is one of the nice things about being a former speechwriter. You can quote the President of the United States and really be quoting yourself.

A headline in *The Independent* the next day read, "Where was the tongue-tied Texan? This was fluent and funny." Reaction was generally positive across the board. We had managed to stop the President's critics in mid-sneer — a worthy goal. But the speech itself made clear that Bush combined the hard elements of national power with the soft appeal of idealism and compassion. He talked about three pillars of international order: reformed, effective international institutions; the restraint of aggression; and the expansion of democracy and development as alternatives to instability and terror. It was a very blur-like foreign policy performance — a theme that I'll return to in a moment.

On the final evening of the state visit, the Americans returned the hospitality of our hosts, entertaining the Queen at an intimate dinner at the American Embassy. As we entered the

dining room, each guest was greeted by the Queen and Prince Philip along with President and Mrs. Bush. I was announced. The President then introduced me to the Queen as, "The man who wrote the speech I just gave." This was met with a blank stare and an awkward silence. Evidently, the elaborate traditions of royal protocol cover every contingency but this one. The Queen could not find anything to say to a speechwriter who was technically not supposed to exist. The moment was embarrassing to me, and the President seemed to enjoy it thoroughly. During that visit I realized something emotionally that I had already known intellectually. The American relationship with Britain is qualitatively different from every other country. I had participated, for example, at public ceremonies in Germany with soldiers marching, and bands playing, and the 41-gun salute. But when I heard *Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles*, the hair rose on the back of my neck. Hearing *God Save the Queen* is like coming home.

I witnessed the closeness of this relationship after 9/11 from a narrow vantage point. Others saw the military preparations or the diplomatic cooperation. I saw the way the rhetoric came together. So let me highlight two small but symbolic moments. In March of 2003, Bush and Blair traveled to the Azores for a summit at a moment of great tension on the verge of the Iraq war. Blair was reluctant to even make the trip even for eight hours, recalling that Margaret Thatcher had been deposed while outside the country. I went along with Bush to work on the draft of the ultimatum speech that would give Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave the country. At the summit, Bush and Blair learned that President Chirac would block any further Security Council resolutions. As the meeting broke up, Condi Rice asked for the ultimatum speech I was holding and gave it directly to Blair. I can remember asking Condi, "When is he going to give that back?" I wasn't sure I wanted British Intelligence looking at advanced copies of presidential speeches. The remarks came back just before Air Force One left for home, with a series of edits to make it more conditional — "if conflict comes." The Prime Minister clearly wanted to hold out the possibility that war might be avoided even at the eleventh hour. Blair's speech edits were incorporated. It is the only example I can recall of a foreign leader being a participant in the presidential speechwriting process.

In 2005 the conditions were reversed. I was attending the Gleneagles G8 with President Bush in Scotland, hosted by Prime Minister Blair. On July 7th, terrorists left a spray of glass and bodies across Tavistock Square in London. I saw Blair immediately afterwards, looking shaken and subdued. But as he gathered information on the attacks, he visibly gathered resolve. Before heading down to London, he called me to his suite and showed me the speech he had written for that evening — concise, elevated, with a perfect pitch of restrained emotion. I was powerless to improve it, but I was honored to be consulted.

These were two leaders — Bush and Blair — working as closely as any in American history. At the very start, of course, the contrast seemed to predominate. Blair was closely identified with Bill Clinton, which Bush did not regard as an accomplishment. Blair had tremendous extemporaneous skills, which was not — shall we say — Bush's gift. Asked what the two had in common, Bush famously said, "We both use Colgate toothpaste." Less famously but more relevantly, Blair responded, "They're going to wonder how you know that, George." Blair, like many British commentators, saw a large political gap between himself and Bush on the assumption that Bush was a leader from the far right. This was simply mistaken. Both Bush and Blair have risen as centrist reformers within their parties. During the 2000 campaign, I and others took the approach of New Labor as a political model for Bush's repositioning of the Republican Party through compassionate

conservatism. Bush's relative moderation on issues such as immigration and fighting poverty is only more evident with time, given current Republican trends.

Over drinks, the Prime Minister's staff would complain that he cared too much for the views of the press and that he made decisions at the last possible minute. These were not Bush weaknesses, but I saw two successful politicians with major similarities. Both were capable of calculation and triangulation. Both had moral and political convictions informed by religion, though British politics made it harder for Blair to mention his faith while in office. Both were root-cause thinkers who believed that unattended problems tend to fester. Both shared a willingness to do difficult, controversial things. Both had similar foreign policy visions — not identical, but similar.

This brings me to two speeches. The first was given by Blair at the Chicago economic club in 1999. I remember it well, because it had a significant influence on my own foreign policy thinking. Reading it now, it remains both compelling and prophetic. More than any other world leader, Blair's foreign policy approach is a rigorous, logical argument. Blair argues that globalization is changing not only the nature of commerce but the nature of international threats. Distant problems can become dangerously uncontainable unless energetically confronted. The chaos is tamed in his view by promoting trade, economic development, and global cooperation. But Blair's liberalism not only purrs, it bites. When distant chaos grows too intense and threatening, military intervention may be necessary, his consistent view — from Rwanda to Kosovo to Sierra Leone to Afghanistan to Iraq. In a Chicago speech he warned, quote, "Many of our problems have been caused by two dangerous and ruthless men: Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic." Both men had reason to fear being on Tony Blair's problem list. This muscular internationalism might be described as half globalization theory and half Gladstone. "In the end," he said, "values and interests merge. If we can establish and spread the values of our liberty, the rule of law, human rights, and an open society, that is in our national interest too. The spread of our values makes us safer."

Fast forward to another speech five years later. In his second inaugural, Bush argued, "For as long as whole regions of the world simmer in resentment and tyranny, prone to ideologies that feed hatred and excuse murder, violence will gather and multiply in destructive power, and cross the most defended borders, and raise a mortal threat. There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant. That is the force of human freedom. We are led by events and common sense to one conclusion. The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one."

Bush's speech, which included the goal of ending tyranny, was profoundly controversial. But the best defense came from Tony Blair in an argument that reveals much about the thinking of both men. "President Bush's inauguration speech last week," Blair said, "marks a consistent evolution of U.S. policy. He spoke of America's mission to bring freedom in place of tyranny to the world. Leave aside for a moment the odd insistence by some commentators that such a pledge is evidence of a neoconservative grip on Washington. I thought progressives were all in favor of freedom rather than tyranny. The underlying features of the speech seemed to be these: America accepts that terrorism cannot be defeated by military might alone. The more people live under democracy with human liberty intact, the less inclined they or their states will be to indulge terrorism or to engage

in it. This may be open to debate —though personally, I agree with it — but it emphatically puts defeating the causes of terrorism alongside defeating the terrorists. Secondly, by its very nature, such a mission cannot be accomplished alone. It is the very antithesis of isolationism and the very essence of international engagement. It is based on enlightened self-interest. Freedom is good in itself, but it is also the best ultimate guarantee that human beings will live in sympathy with one another. The hard head has led to the warm heart," end quote. In this light it is hard to measure much difference between the Blair doctrine and the Bush doctrine.

I don't want to overestimate the role that personality and ideology play in foreign affairs. A close alliance between America and Britain has been the cornerstone of security policy for both nations for over 70 years. Our military ties are traditional, instinctual, and institutional. But I think it is fair to say that the relationship of leaders has made some difference over the decades — between Roosevelt and Churchill, Kennedy and MacMillan, Thatcher and Reagan. I think the Bush/Blair relationship played out in a few key areas. The first was the War on Terrorism. Here Blair was an utterly committed partner from the first moments after 9/11 — which took the lives of 67 British citizens — immediately offering to help on operations in Afghanistan and flying to Washington to attend the September 20th joint session speech in solidarity. Like Bush, Blair saw the attack as a world-changing, epoch-marking event. During a later interview, Blair told me it represented the emergence of a movement with, quote, "completely nonnegotiable demands that is prepared to visit unlimited destruction." Bush and Blair believed they had entered a generational struggle against an ideology akin to fascism or communism requiring both offensive operations and the provision of a compelling ideological alternative. "They are prepared to play a long game," Blair told me, "and they believe that we are not." Bush and Blair were determined to disprove them.

Secondary was Iraq. Here it was never my impression that Blair was a reluctant partner — quite the contrary. He was a strong, consistent advocate of confronting Saddam Hussein as an essential commitment of a just global order. America and Britain had been cooperating in the military containment of Iraq since 1990. Both Bush and Blair were convinced that Hussein continued his development of weapons of mass destruction, a conviction reinforced by the dictator's persistent refusal to cooperate with inspectors. Both Bush and Blair took the humanitarian case against Saddam seriously — chemical attacks, torture, two genocides. Blair advocated securing additional backing in the Security Council for enforcement action. Some in the Bush administration disagreed, but Bush eventually sided with Blair, and Colin Powell, and others in that debate until it was obvious the second Security Council resolution was doomed. When Bush gave Blair the option just before the invasion of backing out to save his premiership, Blair was determined to see it through. All along in memos, phone calls, and video conferences, the level of consultation was extraordinary.

Even more remarkable to me than this initial agreement was Blair's commitment during some of the darkest days of the insurgency. Both Blair and Bush saw the long years of the Iraq war not as an isolated national conflict, but as part of a regional and global struggle. Recently, Blair reflected, "That was a battle against precisely the forces that are trying to destabilize the Middle East today — Al Qaeda on one side, Iran on the other side, and this toxic cocktail of religion, politics, ethnicity and tribalism. What we ended up encountering in Iraq were difficulties that arise from precisely this force of terror unleashed by religious extremism that we still face today if you see what's happening in Syria, across North

Africa, Yemen, and further afield in countries like Pakistan and Iran. I think we're in the middle of this struggle. It's going to take a generation. It's going to be arduous and difficult. But I think we're making a mistake and profound error if we think we can stay out of that struggle."

A third area where the Bush and Blair relationship played out was the Middle East peace process. Blair was constantly pushing for an emphasis on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in the run-up to Iraq. It was one of his major themes at the Azores Summit, for example, just before the war commenced. I think this was motivated by some complementary convictions. A renewed peace process would make clear that the American and British approach to the Middle East was not entirely militarized and [that] we had some serious interest in the Arab world other than invading a portion of it. Blair believed that a peace agreement would remove the main obstacle to other areas of cooperation with Arab governments, including on Iraqi reconstruction. I don't have the time or expertise to summarize Middle Eastern policy during the Bush era. But I believe that Blair's emphasis made a difference, precisely because Bush possessed a natural sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians. I sat in a National Security Council meeting in which the traditional debates were being rehashed on this topic, and Bush finally interjected, "But tell me, who has ever given a damn about the Palestinian people?" Bush's answer was provided in the rose garden speech of 2002 explicitly calling for the creation of a new state of Palestine and for the marginalization of Yasser Arafat, who the President believed was fatally corrupt and compromised by terror. This became the basis for the road map for peace. But so many roads in the Middle East seemed to end in cul-de-sacs or cliffs.

Before I conclude, I want to add one more area of British-American cooperation after 9/11 that doesn't get enough attention. Bush and Blair ended up as allies in a revolutionary, transformative emphasis on Africa. Blair had been a leader in debt cancellation. Bush became a leader in confronting disease on the continent. Blair called on nations to double their aid to Africa. Bush more than tripled overseas development assistance to Africa during his administration. Whatever you think of the War on Terror in Iraq, this partnership on Africa saved and improved the lives of millions of people and was motivated by the same philosophy of humanitarian internationalism. I could present the figures on AIDS treatment, or school attendance, or malaria prevention. Instead, I'll tell one more story showing the virtuous competition between Britain and America on development.

In the run-up to the Gleneagles G8, there was some tension in the relationship over the issue of climate change. Bush admitted a human role and pushed for technological responses but lacked Blair's urgency on the issue. Our negotiating teams were focused on accommodating these differences and working on other matters such as trade. But Blair also wanted his G8 to focus on Africa. In my policy role at the White House, I saw this as a form of policy leverage. I knew that eventually Bush would say in a meeting, "Blair has all these ideas on Africa. So what are we proposing?" That is exactly what happened. For a few months, I had been working with staffers at the National Security Council and USAID on a presidential initiative designed to cut malaria deaths in half in 15 African countries through indoor spraying, treated bed nets, and effective new drugs. I had traveled to Africa to see the problem and had raised the issue of malaria directly with the President during our occasional lunches. The President's malaria initiative, as we called it, was internally controversial. In the situation room policy discussions, some objected to the cost, fearing Congress would make other cuts to cover the proposal. I only asked that the

decision be presented to the President. The oval office meeting to discuss the upcoming G8 included the Vice President, Treasury Secretary, Budget Director, and the Secretary of State. I knew that some intended to argue strenuously against PMI, so I had prepared my counter-arguments carefully. But when the meeting moved on to the portion of the briefing bookmarked "proposals," President Bush leafed through distractedly. Coming to the one on malaria, he said, "I've already talked to Mike about that. I approve it," ending the debate before it began. We announced PMI as a G8 commitment. Along with the Global Fund, it is now conducting a remarkably effective campaign against malaria across the continent, saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, mainly children under five. When considering the Bush/Blair legacy, there are many ups and downs to consider, but Africa needs to be weighed in that balance.

I know I haven't given an academically balanced presentation this evening — which isn't really my job. I imagine there to be plenty of useful counter-balance in other sessions. I'm not unbiased about my old boss, and I gained a tremendous personal respect for Tony Blair over the years, having seen him tested in ways that most of us can hardly imagine. Thirty years ago, Harvard political theorist, Harvey Mansfield, mockingly asked, "Who today is called a liberal for strength and confidence in the defense of liberty?" By this standard, Tony Blair is a liberal. But apart from personal sympathy, I believe that the active internationalism represented by Bush and Blair remains necessary. The interconnected, dangerous world that Blair described in Chicago in 1999 has not gone away. Hopelessness still ferments over time into anger and threats. The disorders of distant places can still arrive on a clear morning, and our indifference or weariness offers no protection.

The point, I think, is demonstrated, at least in part, by the substantial continuity of American foreign policy. There are, of course, large differences in approach and emphasis between President Bush and President Obama. This administration is famously suspicious of grand strategy. But you don't have to look too hard to find the similarities — the preemption of threats in drone strikes, or the continuity in the legal basis for the War on Terrorism, or the aggressive pursuit of intelligence, or the occasional embrace of democracy promotion, or the continuity of efforts to fight global poverty and disease on the theory that hopelessness and lawlessness in the world export problems. Obama is not copying Bush. He is responding to a set of objective circumstances that have not changed. In the post-9/11 world, every President will seek to prevent attacks, influence the milieu that generates them, and encourage the advance of hope against hatred. Perhaps it is needlessly confusing to call this anyone's doctrine. It is, instead, a rather obvious set of strategic reactions to a continuing, undeniable threat combined with some defining American beliefs.

President Obama recently said, quote, "Wherever people long to be free, they will find a friend in the United States." He was not sounding like Bush's second inaugural. Both were sounding the way Americans have always sounded. If the faith that liberty can change the world sounds naïve, I hope our British friends will consider where it came from. Thank you.

Moderator: Mike is happy to take any questions [inaudible 0:35:05] discussion.

Mike: Yeah, happy to take a few questions. There must be someone. Yes, please.

Audience: What about policy differences? What was the issue they differed on the most?

Mike: Well, I mentioned climate, which I think was serious, and the Ambassador will probably confirm that. There was a serious amount of tension there. I think — I'm trying to think of other areas where you might have had that sort of tension. I think there were disagreements on the International Criminal Court and issues in that realm. I think that — but you also had some things that I didn't even mention — the cooperation, say, on Libyan disarmament, which I don't think gets enough attention — really, an extraordinary achievement, which, by the way, made later tasks — when Gaddafi fell — easier. But I guess the extraordinary thing was that people of such extraordinarily different backgrounds came to very similar foreign policy conclusions. But with the addendum that particularly when it came to the role of sometimes international institutions like the ICC or Kyoto where — I think that President Bush eventually realized that he had knocked over — as Condi says — had knocked over a finely carved vase when he undermined the Kyoto Treaty, and it was deeply resented. So there were some continuing consequences on that.

Audience: Yes, I'd like to ask you for a moment about the "axis of evil" phrase. In the British Chilcot inquiry there have been many allusions to the fact of how inappropriate that phrase was at a time when the British and to some extent even the Americans were trying to construct some reasonable overtures to Iran and a general feeling that Jack Straw says that phrase alone totally destroyed the overtures to Iran. I'm wondering to what extent were you even aware that such overtures were underway when that phrase got injected into the speech.

Mike: Well, first, I think — stepping back one step — it's important to understand what the phrase actually referred to in the speech. It did not refer to some imagined alliance between the three countries we mentioned. It was talking about the relationship of states like these and terrorist organizations. The reason that Condi, and Steve, and others involved in this process determined that list was because these were state sponsors of terror. They were on our list. We actually have a list in the U.S. government, and these were examples on that list. I was not privy to discussions about the status of U.S. negotiations with Iran, which I assume were ongoing in various periods. But the purpose here, as you see in the West Point speech or other remarks, is to talk about how modern problems had been changed by the globalization of threats and the advances in technology. We had a vivid phrase to try to explain that. But I will be completely honest with you. In the discussions of that speech with people in the National Security Council and in the broader staffing process that went to the State Department, there was a general feeling that we were simply using the names of state sponsors of terror and that we had diagnosed them as such in a variety of presidential communications. It was not just in this place that we were announcing that this was the case.

Audience: Nice to see you, Mike.

Mike: Yeah, good to see you.

Audience: Which speech or two would you say generated the greatest, most intense interagency debate?

Mike: I think there's almost no doubt that the speech that caused the most interdepartmental disagreement was probably the rose garden speech announcing the President's new

approach to negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. But for me it was a graduate seminar in the way that government should be conducted. I was a fly on the wall, because I was working on the remarks directly with the President on this topic in the National Security Council meetings that led up to that speech. You had everyone very effectively making just the arguments you would expect given their equities — Colin Powell arguing the reaction of the Arab street; the Vice President talking about Israeli security. People were playing their role in this process, and the President and Condi really brought in the different emphasis here — which was [that] we're not going to make any serious progress here unless you have the effective vindication of Palestinian hopes by Palestinian leaders, because it is the only route to have a responsible negotiating partner and which has been the main thing lacking in this process. It was an insight that kind of broke an internal debate and that the President embraced fully. It was very consistent with his view of the world.

Mike: I will tell you, however, that I was told in the immediate aftermath when he made the speech calling for the marginalization of Yasser Arafat that the people over at the State Department were furiously calling around, saying, "Well, this must have been a gaffe. How do we reverse it?" It was not a gaffe. So I think that that really was a — it was a fascinating process to me. A lot of these people have — actors in this drama had been making these arguments for 20, 30 years. I had not. I was just watching the process, and it was a very high-level and interesting discussion. I thought people would be proud of their government under that circumstance. That's not always true with speechwriting processes. But it showed how a speechwriting process can also be a policy creation process and point to some new paths. You know, I would also say that people knew going into it that the second inaugural was going to cause waves around the world. I worked closely with Steve and others on that speech, and I remember being on the west front of the Capitol, the speech ending, walking the route up Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, and getting a call from Steve Hadley saying, "I'm getting lots of calls asking, 'What does this mean for me?' from other governments." That was an intended effect there as well, but it was one that had to be managed over the next several weeks in ways that set realistic expectations. The speech itself — I think the best criticism of that speech that came afterwards was that the goals were presented in poetry, and the qualifications were presented in prose. There were plenty of qualifications in the speech. We were addressing a variety of audiences. But it was easily misunderstood. So I think that had not so much a lot of internal controversy, but caused a significant external controversy.

Audience: [Inaudible 0:44:32]

Mike: Please, uh-huh.

Colin: Thanks. Whether people agree or disagree with the particular vision that was articulated after 9/11, there was clearly a vision for the international order that the Bush administration hoped to establish. Obviously, you played an important role in shaping the narrative of that vision. I wonder, when you think about the two major parties today, in particular the Republican Party — I mean, you mentioned that the Obama administration lacks even an interest in grand strategy, let alone kind of a clear articulation of it, although it's a little ironic given that, I think, maybe the strongest criticism of the Obama administration is actually that the President has given tremendous speeches on international affairs and has not delivered on a lot of those speeches. I say this as a Democrat. But I wonder, looking at the Republican Party, is there a vision in the

Republican Party for what foreign policy means anymore? Are there competing visions? I don't know what any of the visions are, frankly. I don't see a substantial strain of the Republican Party embracing the vision that you all advanced. I don't see it having a lot of traction among the base of the Republican Party, and there are certainly elements within the Republican Party that advance a vision that is almost 180 degrees out from where you were. But I think you're in a much better position to comment on it than me. I was just wondering what your sense of where the vision thing is these days in the Republican Party.

Mike: I fully expect the 2016 Primary process to focus a lot on foreign policy. I think it's going to be a very serious debate. One of the reasons it'll be a serious debate is because it is one of the motivating factors for Rand Paul. People look at modern libertarianism as an economic doctrine, but a lot of its roots are really in a fundamental foreign policy critique that the national security state has been an instrument in changing the nature of the constitutional order. So there will be a fundamental critique on America's role in the world, assuming that Rand Paul plays a serious role in this debate. The question is: Who can respond in an articulate fashion. There is a Republican establishment. Every party has that, and the reality is even in the controversy surrounding Iraq and everything — you know, John McCain and Mitt Romney represented the broad outlines of that international strain within the party. Chris Christie does as well. I think that Rubio is a hybrid, because he also has Tea Party credentials, but in fact, a very principled, committed internationalist. Rubio is one of the largest Republican champions now of the rising generation of leaders of international aid programs, and development, and other issues. So there are people that have fairly strong views in this debate and are likely to have this argument. It has taken on — in the Tea Party in particular — an ideological cast. It has become much easier to criticize American global engagement when it's conducted by Barack Obama. It's a highly polarized — foreign policy has become a polarized debate. It has given a lot of Republicans who had questions during the Bush era that were not open the permission to bring them out in public and to do so in a way that fits their partisan predispositions anyway. I think that that is the key factor here.

I don't want to underestimate — people in this room know much better than I do that America just a few months ago was on the verge of something absolutely extraordinary. We're on the verge of the U.S. Congress cutting the legs out from under and American President in the conduct of a military operation in the context of weapons of mass destruction at the heart of the American interests. That would have been a tremendous moment in modern American history and a very destructive one. All of these factors that you're talking about played a role in that. Republicans had no loyalty to the President's approaching engagement on these issues. Democrats have their own ideological currents. I think through an extraordinary set of circumstances, America avoided a moment in American foreign policy that would only be comparable to the defeat of the League of Nations or something like that. So I don't want to sound too hopeful. I think that the best criticism — if I'm making an outside criticism — of the Bush administration on these issues is that because of the complexities of our engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq that the appetite for U.S. engagement is low. The problem with that, of course, is that that weariness and suspicion on the part of the American public is both completely understandable and has literally nothing to do with the strategic realities we face. That's going to require a lot of presidential leadership moving forward. I won't make a comprehensive critique of the President, who — as I said — I support in many ways on elements of his agenda. But we found in the Syrian crisis that ambivalent, last-minute

leadership is not going to do that. It's not going to provide what's necessary to do engagement in the world. I'm fearful about that dialogue within the Republican Party and in the broader political debate.

Audience: I guess I have a similar question to Colin's, but I want to take it back into the earlier Bush phase, not the present. You remarked that your thinking on foreign policy was actually influenced quite a bit by the 1999 Chicago speech, by Blair's speech. I wonder — certainly in the campaign that kind of ringing, liberal, progressive vision of the world and the importance of globalization didn't feature. In fact, it was in many ways the opposite on particularly the emphasis on bringing freedom and better government to developing parts of the world. Right? There was a focus on foreign policy. It was a very different emphasis on foreign policy with respect to Asia or something like that. So 9/11 was a crystallizing moment. It could have made the Blair vision make more sense. But I guess I wonder, was your sense that prior to 9/11 the President had these leanings, there was an appeal to this liberal agenda, or was it that the moment had such an effect? Frankly, also because we're emphasizing the U.S./UK relationship in this conference, what was the pre-9/11 relationship, and how was it influenced by this very liberal idea — liberal idea not in the modern American sense of liberal — that you were describing in your talk?

Mike: It's a very good question. When I first came down here to Austin, we had a governor of a large state with no foreign policy background. He had seen his father as Ambassador to China and had certain — had been in a milieu of the White House but had not been forced to think systematically on one of those issues. We had a remarkable series of briefings organized by Josh Bolton, who was our policy director of our campaign, that brought people — including a very diverse group of people — in to give the President briefings on a variety of topics. I sat in those, and it was an extraordinary experience. So we had Richard Armitage, and Paul Wolfowitz, and Vice President Cheney, and Condi Rice, and Bob Zoellick. These were people who didn't agree with one another in many ways, but they did a series of briefings for the President where I remember him going through late into the night at the governor's mansion here, "If the North Koreans invade, how far will they get before we can have troops here? Under what circumstances would we use nuclear weapons?" It was eye-opening for me. So we only really did one major foreign policy speech in that, and it was a middle-of-the-road international speech at the Reagan Library. I think we had, if I remember correctly, one kind of serious policy initiative in this — which was Condi's — to talk about offensive missile reductions. I'm trying to remember the details of that. But there wasn't much there as far as framework and construct. Then in the early stages of the administration we had the confrontation of China over the downed fliers. We had random events that didn't seem to add up to very much.

I really do think that that 9/11 did crystallize a lot of things intuitively for the President, but they were preexisting. I mean, the President had a moralistic approach to politics and, I think, in the best sense of the word views things in moral categories. He was, as I tried to mention, a root-cause thinker. I could see him thinking through these issues, say, on the Palestinian peace process. "What would solve this problem and not just manage it around the edges?" That, I think, led to some of the ambition of what we eventually did after 9/11 and the crystallization of the Bush Doctrine. But I guess I do have to attribute 9/11 as playing a kind of formative role in that. But within that, the President had not been an isolationist. We had been a mainstream Reagan-like — the parameters of a kind of Reagan-like foreign policy. It had accommodated a group of advisers that held very

different views on those topics. That speech had to get that broad agreement. Bob Zoellick is different than Paul Wolfowitz. I was involved in trying to make all that work in the speech, and you ended up with just a middle-of-the-road kind of speech. But I think that 9/11 probably played a really decisive role in the way the President took his existing values and reconceived his view on our global role.

Audience: So you've spoken very eloquently as to how the rhetoric of Anglo-American relations at this time flavor or hints at a very deep strategic agreement as to what the objectives of Anglo-American policy basically are. But I think a lot of diplomatic historians and a lot of international relations scholars in the room would also say that diplomacy, especially public policy speeches, can often mask — and you've hinted at this — very deep operational disagreements, and especially the disagreements over the means to get these objectives. So I was wondering if you could maybe speak to, to what extent that's true. Is that true in your experience in the Bush administration? Maybe highlight a couple of examples where even agreement on the ends sought doesn't overcome agreement on the means to get there — or does.

Mike: No, I think it's a very fair point, but I'd make it in a slightly different way. President Bush used his speeches to drive his own administration on policy. He saw it as a tool to — like in the example that I was talking about — to direct the bureaucracies, to control the direction of bureaucracies by enunciating policies with clarity and boldness. I don't want to say this is directed at the State Department, but some of this was, "I'm going to be clear not only to foreign audiences, but to clearly set the goals of my own administration." So that leads to a circumstance where sometimes speeches could get out ahead of policy, because that was part of his goal. He wanted the speeches to stretch boundaries of policy. I'll give you an example. We had a healthy democracy-promotion element to our rhetoric, and then in the immediate aftermath of when we began to make some of these speeches, Elliott Abrams, I remember — at the National Security Council — and I, we asked for an accounting of U.S. democracy promotion programs in every department of government. I think it took nine months to a year to get the document. It came back in 16 different departments or something with programs where a significant portion had literally nothing to do with democracy promotion. They had just been put in budgetary categories in order to get funded. So our structure was so far behind any coordinated effort to try to engage in serious — because the President was not simplistic about democracy promotion. This is not just elections. It's promotion of a civil society, the promotion of judicial institutions and all these things. The instruments weren't there. The President declared the goals, and the instruments were well behind.

Eventually, I was part of the policy review process where we undertook a review of all of our aid programs to make them more outcome-oriented. It was a big interdepartmental process based at the State Department in policy planning. We were going to talk about various categories of countries of what the greatest need for aid was, how we move countries from one category to another — just some kind of construct — and that process pretty much failed. It failed, because the Secretary of State was going to have to pick fights with just about everyone else in the U.S. government in order to centralize these roles. It failed, because the Congress wanted to micromanage a lot of our programs that — you know, categories of spending — and that would have been a huge fight as well. So I saw that frustration when I was there. The words get you so far, and the President wanted to be clear. "This is what we're going to do." I'm sure you've had this discussion, but the Bush Doctrine as it developed over time, it included elements of preemption, which I think

are fully consistent with American history; democracy promotion, which we had very little effective infrastructure to accomplish; and then development in the fight against disease. That's really a third element of that. There we had a lot more to work with, and the method that we used was the presidential initiative, which could essentially create centralized command and control structures, adequately funded, outcome-oriented, get things done. It's one of the reasons he liked that instrument. So you do PEPFAR. You do the President's malaria initiative, or you do women's justice empowerment initiatives. It was the one area that the President could do really big things, and plan them from scratch, and put somebody in charge, and hold them accountable for results. Some of those, I think, were, frankly, more effective than other elements of our agenda.

Moderator: Time for one more question.

George: Mike.

Mike: Hey, George. How are you?

George: How are you doing? Good to see you. Thanks for coming to Texas.

Mike: Sure.

George: Always glad to have you [inaudible 1:04:22]. Were you surprised that President Bush and Prime Minister got along so famously after Blair and President Clinton were so close? If not, why not?

Mike: I [unintelligible 1:04:36] a little bit. I mean, this was a case — you read Blair's own autobiography and his account of their relationship, and his framework was, "I didn't think this relationship would work out, because I was a man of the center-left, and this guy was far out there on the right." I knew that was not the case. In fact, they were very similar in tone — politicians that were very similar in tone when it came to ideology — domestic ideology. So that obstacle was, I think, a false or artificial one. The idioms could hardly be more different, but I guess ultimately, I think that you're seeing now that they're both in some sense — and I know people will see this as dismissive — but I think they're people that have a moralistic approach to politics, and they view things through a prism of right and wrong. That is a deep sympathy.

George: It creates inevitable common ground. Doesn't it?

Mike: Yeah, I think so. So the approach they took to politics just had that common element. As I said, there were tensions in that relationship, and there's no question. But I think the similarities were deeper.

Moderator: Well, this officially concludes our evening proceedings. Just a couple of observations — the first is that as academic conferences go, we don't have an official curfew, so I can't prevent our out-of-town friends from enjoying the charms of 6th Street. But I would observe that we start tomorrow morning at 8:15 a.m., and Professor Suri, I know that you as a moderator of the morning panel would appreciate it if everyone is bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, and ready to go then. Right?

Audience: You're giving us all wake-up calls.

Moderator: That's right — at 8:14. So anyway, we do start tomorrow morning at 8:15. Cathy and Jacqueline, the van will be outside to take anyone back to the AT&T Center that needs. Right?

Female: Yeah, same place when they were dropped off.

Moderator: Okay. Okay. Fantastic.

Audience: Do you want to tell people about the bar? Would that be okay — [unintelligible 1:07:19] bar?

Moderator: Oh, well, actually, you know it better than I do — you or Bill if you guys want to.

Audience: Go ahead.

Audience: No, you go ahead.

Audience: I don't know much about this.

Audience: This is where Lyndon and Ladybird had their first date.

Moderator: Yeah, this is true. So anyway, a little bit of Texas, and UT, and LBJ school history here.

Audience: Look at you in boots.

Moderator: Hey, I go native. Oh, actually, I've had boots for about 20 years, but anyway. I am from Arizona, so Texas is a comfortable place for me with the truck and the boots. The one other housekeeping item is we have a full morning tomorrow with two robust and scintillating panels followed by some very profound concluding remarks by Professor Leffler, and those will wrap up at 1:30. Then kickoff, for those of us fortunate enough to go to the game, is at 2:30. The stadium is only about a five-minute walk from where we are, but we'll want to be ready to head on over there right after the conference finishes up. So anyway, thank you very much. Have a good rest tonight, and we'll see you tomorrow morning.

[End File. Recorded Time = 1:08:56 = 69 minutes]