

BUSH BY THE NUMBERS

(Public approval rating)

The incredible shrinking man

THE LONG-HAUL LEADERSHIP

Chapter 3 of term is a cliffhanger

By Bob Kemper

Scholars of the American presidency gathered earlier this year at Princeton University and, after much debate, reached a consensus of sorts on the presidency of George W. Bush.

Bush is a president of conviction and vision, they said. He is consistent, decisive and self-confident.

Bush also lacks intellectual curiosity and is prone to religious zealotry, they said. He is impulsive, possibly reckless, dismissive of other points of view and arrogant.

Bush, it would appear, can be viewed as polarized, as well as polarizing, as he enters a distinct third phase of his presidency on the eve of his bid for re-election.

To date, it is almost as though there have been three Bush presidencies, three clear chapters to his tenure. The first runs from Bush's inauguration through the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, when Bush was finding his feet, and the second extends from the attacks through the Iraq war, when the country was united behind him.

The third phase, more ambiguous, encompasses the postwar period as Bush heads to-

PLEASE SEE **BUSH**, PAGE 5

Bob Kemper is a member of the Tribune's Washington Bureau who covers the White House.

THE LURCHING ECONOMY

Big shoes to fill, and not his father's

By William Neikirk

The presidential election could well be decided in 2004 by the collective judgment of thousands of super-cautious American employers. If they want to boost the re-election chances of George W. Bush, they must start hiring again.

But will they? This is the troubling question hanging over the White House a little more than a year away from decision day. And time is running out for the president. Already Democrats are comparing him to Herbert Hoover—who was president when the Depression began—and ridiculing his tax cuts.

Since Bush took office, the economy has lost more than 3 million jobs, the result of post-boom retrenchment, terrorism and war. Unless hiring resumes and the jobless rate declines, he could suffer the same fate as his father—defeat even as the economy is growing, only not fast enough to cut unemployment.

This would be a grand irony. No one has tried harder than George W. Bush to avoid a repeat of his father's rejection by voters. His tax cuts and constant expressions of sympathy with the jobless are testaments to that. But

PLEASE SEE **ECONOMY**, PAGE 2

Tribune senior correspondent William Neikirk writes about the economy.

FLAPPING COATTAILS

Bush still offers trickle-down appeal

By Jeff Zeleny

The instructions from the Oval Office are clear: A lonely victory is not good enough.

It's an accept-no-excuses directive that comes straight from the lips of the president. It's been hammered into the minds of administration officials, campaign workers and Republican fundraisers. And it's one of many worries of the Democratic Party.

While the White House launches a campaign to re-elect the president next year, a serious strategy is also under way to build a lasting Republican majority that would extend to every level of government—Congress as well as capitals, county courthouses and city councils across America.

"Something is happening underneath in American politics," Karl Rove, the president's chief political strategist, said earlier this year, speaking about his desire to build a durable majority for the Republican Party that he hopes will last for years to come.

The effort, perhaps unthinkable after the messy election of 2000, actually began last year when Republicans adopted traditional Democratic-style methods of grass-roots poli-

PLEASE SEE **PARTY**, PAGE 4

National political correspondent Jeff Zeleny is a member of the Tribune's Washington Bureau.

A DANGEROUS POLICY

Which came first, the 1st strike or . . .

By Howard Witt

The trouble with pre-emption is that others can beat you to it.

That's just one of the bitter lessons the Bush administration has had to learn since the Sept. 11 attacks forced America on the offensive in a new and unanticipated war on terrorism.

When President Bush laid out his doctrine last year and warned hostile regimes such as Iraq, Iran and North Korea that the United States would strike pre-emptively if faced with an imminent threat, his intention was to discourage the further spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Yet Washington's pre-emptive war in Iraq—the weakest of those three nations Bush labeled the "axis of evil"—led North Korea and Iran to accelerate their quests to build up nuclear arsenals, in the view of many experts. The mullahs who rule Iran and the hermitic dictator in charge of North Korea both appear to have concluded that having nuclear bombs is the surest way to pre-empt Washington from pre-empting them.

Nearly two years after the Sept. 11 attacks, any assessment of the Bush administration's

PLEASE SEE **PRE-EMPT**, PAGE 8

Senior correspondent Howard Witt covers diplomacy and international affairs for the Tribune.



Tribune photo illustration

U.S. rocketing down a road that leads to victory, Vietnam-style

By Michael Kilian

Udai and Qusai Hussein may be dead, the U.S. may be closing in on father Saddam, but the war in Iraq goes on and on, day after day, ambush after ambush, soldier after soldier, with no clear end in view.

Michael Kilian is a member of the Tribune's Washington Bureau who writes about military affairs.

The demise of the two major monsters of Saddam Hussein's brutal regime last month did nothing to abate the attacks by Iraqi insurgents. In the days since the brothers' deaths, at least 16 American soldiers and a U.S. civilian have been killed in ambushes and attacks. Four more soldiers died of other causes, and a car bomb Thursday killed at least 19 Jordanians and Iraqis.

President Bush proclaimed at a recent news conference that "con-

ditions in most of Iraq are growing more peaceful."

But, he said, in some areas "the violent remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, joined by terrorists and criminals, are making a last attempt to frighten the Iraqi people and to undermine the resolve of our coalition. They will fail."

Despite this sang-froid, debate in Washington is intensifying over whether the U.S. is on the road to success in Iraq or trudging down the path to "another

Vietnam."

According to Washington's leading expert on Iraq, Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, even the elimination of Hussein might stand as only "a partial success," because it would not halt the attacks by the widely decentralized insurgents who are inflicting such pain on U.S. forces.

Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other administration leaders concede that the

U.S. struggle and stay in Iraq will be difficult and long, but they fiercely resist any comparison with the long, bitter, bloody and ultimately unsuccessful conflict in Vietnam.

Rumsfeld has repeatedly refused to accept the term "guerrilla war" as applied to Iraq, even though Gen. John Abizaid, the new Central Command leader who is in charge of our Iraq oper-

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PRE-EMPT: U.S. keeps fighting wars it already won

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handling of the nation's foreign affairs boils down to a fundamental, existential question: Is America, and the world, any safer now?

The answer is a definitive maybe.

On the one hand, the United States has fought two successful wars against outlaw nations, handily defeating the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan and speedily ousting the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. Security services around the world have arrested hundreds of terrorist suspects, including half of the suspected leadership of Al Qaeda. Terror attacks worldwide declined last year.

And in the Middle East, the administration finally got Israeli and Palestinian leaders to begin talking about peace

again. "On balance, things are going extremely well," said Danielle Pletka, a terrorism expert at the American Enterprise Institute, the powerful neoconservative think tank that has furnished the White House with much of the rationale for its pre-emptive approach to the world, and many of the senior administration officials who are carrying it out.

"It's easy to forget where we were six months or two years ago," she added. "If your benchmark is Sept. 10, 2001, we've come a very long way."

But on the other hand, the United States is still fighting the two wars it won so successfully, trying to rout suspected Al Qaeda and Taliban holdouts in Afghanistan and quash rising guerrilla attacks in Iraq. Hussein and Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden remain at large. Terrorists are still striking soft targets, such as last week's bombing of the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, seemingly at will.

The nascent Mideast peace process stands in danger of collapse as both sides begin to resist making substantial concessions.

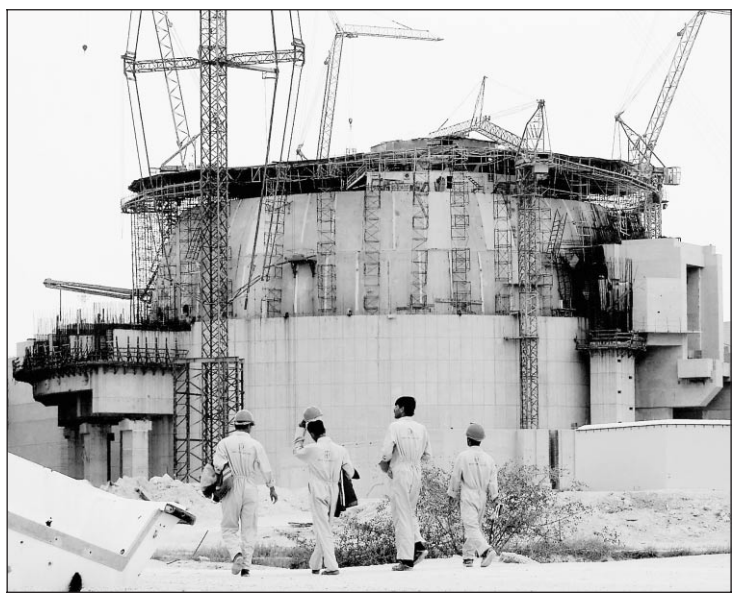
"The Bush doctrine has made the world more dangerous," said Morton Halperin, a senior State Department official during the Clinton administration. "Pre-emption is a part of our arsenal that has always existed and always has to exist. But you should not talk about it. And you certainly should not talk about it in terms you are not prepared to meet and in terms which just encourage other nations to get nuclear weapons."

Limits of pre-emption

North Korea provides the clearest example of the limits of pre-emption.

"North Korea is processing plutonium," Halperin said. "It will soon have nuclear weapons. And all the horrors that the president described in Iraq—which I think were not totally wrong but were overdrawn, especially in their imminence—are all true about North Korea."

Although White House officials often proclaim that they are prepared to use military force if necessary to prevent Pyongyang from expanding its nuclear inventory—or, worse, selling bombs to terrorists—in reality any pre-emptive strike against North Korea's nuclear



Knight Ridder/Tribune photo by Reza Moattarian

Russia helped Iran build a nuclear power plant in Bushehr that Moscow says will not help Tehran develop nuclear weapons. Iran also independently built two uranium-processing sites.

facilities could provoke an instant disaster in the region.

That's because the North has a million-member army and thousands of artillery pieces arrayed on the border with South Korea just 40 miles from Seoul—enough firepower to devastate the South Korean capital

and kill thousands of people within minutes. And that's without even considering the chance that Pyongyang, in the event of an American attack, might be able to fire off one of its nuclear bombs toward South Korea or Japan atop one of its increasingly capable ballistic

missiles. Little wonder, then, that the Bush administration keeps emphasizing its preference for a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis.

The White House learned another tough lesson after the Sept. 11 attacks: Not all hostile regimes are created equal.

Early on, the president seemed to set out with ringing clarity his uncompromising view of states that support terrorism.

"All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price," Bush told the West Point graduating class in June 2002. "We will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants."

Candidate for 'axis of evil'?

But imagine a country run by a military dictator that possesses nuclear weapons and the ballistic missiles to fire them, peddles its nuclear know-how to outlaw regimes and allows Islamic terrorist groups to stage cross-border raids from its territory.

If that sounds like a prime candidate to join the administration's axis of evil, alongside Iran and North Korea, think again. The country is Pakistan, for which the Bush administration is seeking an additional \$3 billion in U.S. economic and military support as thanks for its support in the battle against terrorism.

"We've had no better partner in our war on terror," Bush said in June, during a visit to Camp David by Pakistan's general-cum-president, Pervez Musharraf.

Musharraf did play a critical role in the war in neighboring Afghanistan, abruptly withdrawing his country's long support of the fundamentalist Taliban and aligning himself with the United States. Pakistan has also helped track down and arrest major Al Qaeda figures hiding inside its cities.

But it's getting harder and harder for Washington to ignore the debit side of Pakistan's ledger: Repeated raids into India staged by Pakistan-based Islamic militant groups; suspicions that Pakistan helped North Korea with its nuclear program; Musharraf's slow progress toward democratization; and growing Islamic extremism across the country.

"Pakistan is becoming the most dangerous country in the world," Stephen Cohen, a South Asia expert at the Brookings Institution, said during a forum on terrorism in May. "You can try to contain Pakistan, and see it as a hopeless state beyond redemption. But there's a slight difficulty with that approach: Pakistan has 15 to 40 nuclear weapons and a willingness to use them, especially against India."

Diplomacy failure

In the realm of international diplomacy, the Bush administration discovered yet another lesson: the law of unintended consequences.

Fiercely guarding its prerogative to protect America as it saw fit, the Bush administration resisted granting the United Nations veto power over its plans to invade Iraq and administer it afterward. When the White House decided to topple Hussein even after it failed to win Security Council endorsement for such an action, many nations regarded it as an affront to world order.

Now that the Pentagon finds itself saddled with a troubled post-Hussein occupation, and the White House hopes to solicit other nations to contribute security forces to help pacify and rebuild Iraq, much of the world is balking. Major potential contributors, such as France and India, will participate only under a broader UN mandate.

Even Pletka, a staunch defender of the administration, concedes that the White House failed in its diplomacy over Iraq.

"What the U.S. has done has been right as a matter of policy choice," Pletka said. "But as a matter of diplomacy, explaining to people what we're doing, and in respecting the adulthood of other nations, we have been lacking. This lack in diplomacy has been a part of the problem."

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Unfortunately, page 5 of today's RadioShack Insert in today's paper was printed with a pictorial error.

The product pictured for the #14-1163 compact microcassette recorder is incorrect. It is not voice-activated as shown in the photo.

We apologize for any inconvenience this might have caused.