

Lecture:

The end of the Cold War and the advent of a Republican Administration in 2001 has posed some intriguing questions about the future directions which U.S. foreign policy will take in the new Millennium.. Particularly interesting are the elements of continuity and change which may distinguish the Bush from the Clinton administrations, as both Presidents at first were not considered very experienced in the field of foreign affairs. As the State Department ([State department](#)) had pointed out in its Strategic Plan for the year 2000, the end of the Cold War left the United States in the position of being the world's only remaining superpower, or as French Foreign Minister Verdine has said, "hyper-power." As a result, at the time, it was believed that the U.S. faced no immediate and direct threats to its vital interests, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Instead, the Strategic Plan stressed that multiple threats of a lower intensity had emerged in the form of regional conflicts fuelled by ethnic and religious hatred, threats posed by rogue states such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, problematical relations with China and Russia, and more unconventional security threats such as terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking. Terrorism did not play a central role in this analysis. There was no inkling, it seems, at the time, that the United States would be subjected to the kind of megaterrorist attack on the World Trade Center that resulted in thousands of casualties (the latest estimate consisting of about 3000 people).

This was to change markedly with the issuance of the Bush administration's national security strategy in 2002, which emphasized the central role of terrorism as opposed to the traditional security threats which had characterized the international system prior to 9/11. This in turn was also followed by the elaboration of the doctrine of preemptive defense, in which the United States reserved the right to strike at a country first, rather than pursuing the old Cold War doctrine of deterrence.

In the decade that has followed the end of the Cold War, the mood of the American public has been swept by a "new isolationism", one of the cyclical moods which seems to periodically characterize American foreign policy and which signals a desire to withdraw from the assumption of its international responsibilities. 9/11, of course, convinced most Americans that the US had to play a more active role in the international arena.

The United States and Western Europe

Nonetheless, the United States is now enjoying a unipolar moment in world history, where it is viewed as the dominant or hegemonic power in the international system. Even before 9/11, the hegemonic position of the United States in the post-Cold War international system had resulted in a strain in the transatlantic relationship between Europe and the United States. The collapse of the Soviet Union has meant that Western Europe is less dependent upon the United States than it was during the Cold War. The American tendency to dictate to rather than consult with its allies as seen in West European capitals, has contributed to the emergence of a new anti-Americanism. The events of 9/11 still left unresolved the differences that have characterized a strain in the relationship between the United States and Western Europe.. Even after 9/11, the Europeans resented what they felt was a return by the Bush administration to its old unilateralist methods, with speculation that once the U.S. had completed the destruction of the Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, and the war against Iraq in 2003, without taking European concerns and objections adequately into account. However, on a trip to Europe in May 2002, President Bush



stressed that the US was not behaving in a unilateralist fashion, but would only act on its principled positions after it had been unable to reach compromises with its European allies on the issues concerned. Nonetheless, a serious rift opened up in German-American relations during the electoral campaign in Germany in 2002 when Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in his bid for reelection stated that Germany would not support the United States in the event that it went to war against Iraq. This resulted in a further stress in the relationship between Bonn and Washington, as President Bush viewed Schroeder's position as a personal betrayal, even though the reelected German Chancellor announced in November 2002 that his country would allow the Americans to utilize German airspace in the event of a war with Iraq. In 2003, both France and Germany, as well as Russia and China, opposed US efforts to secure a Security Council resolution authorizing a US led war against Iraq.

A further source of strain was the fact that Germany as well as France also opposed the application of the US death penalty even for Al Qaeda operatives, such as Zacarias Moussaoui, who was on trial in the United States in 2002.

The New Isolationism

The new isolationism and tendency towards unilateralism in American Foreign policy has generated resentment in Europe, because the United States tends to view itself as the "indispensable" nation, fuelled by a unique sense of exceptionalism, that what is good for the United States is good for the rest of the world. The resentment that U.S. unilateralism has generated was evident in May 2001 when the United States was not elected to the Human Rights Commission for the first time in the history of the United Nations. Obviously, some of its European "friends" voted against it. However, in May 2002, the United States returned to the Human Rights Commission.

The new isolationism has been marked by less interest on the part of American elites and the public in foreign affairs, and a reduction in the percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) spent on foreign aid. The bulk of U.S. foreign aid has gone to states considered "pivotal" to its vital interests, such as Indonesia, Egypt, and Israel.

The new isolationism has also manifested itself in U.S. unwillingness to support the international agreement that was concluded in 1997, banning the production, use, and stockpiling of landmines, the rejection of the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) in 1999, the failure to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) which was created in 1998 (although the U.S. signed the Statute of the ICC on the last day that it could, and the Bush administration announced that it intended to "unsign" the treaty); the U.S. in 2002 also concluded bilateral agreements with several countries in which they promised not to extradite U.S. military personnel for trial by the ICC at the Hague; and the U.S. rejection of the Kyoto agreement that was designed to reduce the emission of industrial gases into the atmosphere. The failure of the U.S. to pay its regular and peacekeeping dues to the United Nations (until a deal was worked out by Richard Holbrooke in 2001) also reflected the new isolationism. All of these examples of the new isolationism reflect a growing concern on the part of the United States to protect the erosion of its sovereignty in an era of growing globalization.

A European Defense and Security Force

NATO's air war against Serbia in 1999 and the destruction of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, demonstrated also to the West Europeans how dependent militarily they were on the United



States. This has resulted in a West European move to revive an older idea of creating some kind of a West European defense force. The West European Union which had been created in 1948 to function as a collective defense organization, and later, as the military arm of the European Union, turned out to be a paper tiger, and was overshadowed by the creation of NATO in 1949. In 1954, the West Europeans tried to create a European Defense Community, a proposal which was rejected by the French.

In the aftermath of the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the West Europeans would like to create a robust military Rapid Reaction Force which would reduce their dependence on the United States. The Americans, on the other hand, have criticized the idea of a European Defense and Security Force, because they feel that it would delink the U.S. from Europe, and undermine America's hegemonic position there. Nonetheless, in 2003, a European Union force replaced a NATO force that had been operating in Macedonia to help maintain a cease-fire that had been negotiated between the Macedonian government and rebel Albanian forces there. The European Union was also interested in sending a peacekeeping force, led by France, into the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well.

The National Missile Defense System

U.S. relations with Europe have also worsened because of the determination on the part of the Bush administration to go ahead with the construction of a NMD (National Missile Defense) system, even if it meant opting out of the 1972 ABM treaty, without consulting with the Russians. (although the Bush administration did subsequently consult with the Russians, tying the abandonment of the 1972 ABM treaty to the further reduction of US/Russian strategic nuclear weapons) The NMD would mean developing the capacity to shoot down ICBMs supposedly launched accidentally by Russia, or on purpose by China, or by rogue states such as North Korea, Iran, or Iraq (prior to its conquest by the US and Britain in 2003)

.Such a system, which has not been technically perfected, would cost at a minimum about \$60 billion, and has been compared to trying to shoot down a bullet with a bullet. Critics argued that the Bush administration was in a rush to construct it without adequate testing. Furthermore, critics have argued that the NMD would undermine the entire arms control and disarmament structure that has been constructed since the end of the Cold War. by abandoning the 1972 ABM treaty. Opponents argue that the NMD would contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons as Russia and China would construct more weapons to overwhelm the system. (see [National Missile Defense: An Indefensible System](#)) in order to assure their own national security. The 1972 ABM Treaty was indeed shelved in 2002 as the Bush administration reached an agreement with Russia to reduce the number of strategic nuclear weapons as a quid pro quo. However, this latest Russian-American treaty has also been sharply criticized because it does not actually result in the destruction of strategic nuclear weapons, but rather results in their being stockpiled.

A hyper-power in an emerging multipolar system

Even though the U.S. has been categorized as a "hyper-power", it functions in a post-Cold War world which is characterized by an emerging multipolarity with different Great Powers such as China, Russia (although it could be argued that China and Russia should be considered regional as opposed to Great Powers) and Japan. Both France and Russia in 2003, continued efforts to create a multipolar world. But as of 2007, their efforts to create a significant counter-alliance to check the hegemony of the U.S. were still underway without too much visible success, a new French president pursued a more pro-American foreign policy. Neorealists



such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer argue that multipolar balances of power automatically arise to check the power of a hegemonic state like the United States

.In an international system dominated by a hegemonic or even imperial power like the United States, weaker states also have the option of **bandwagoning** by joining in an alliance with the hegemon, or forming counter-alliances to balance the power of the hegemon. Political scientists feel that the choice is between Bandwagoning and balancing. As far as counterbalancing is concerned, for example, China and Russia have tried to form a triangular alliance with India, which Iran would also like to join, to check the power of the U.S., in addition to recent French efforts to construct a multipolar world. A process of realignment since 9/11 has been underway in the international system, as this catastrophic event reverberates throughout the entire political structure. Although French efforts at creating a multipolar world to counter the hegemony of the United States, long preceded 9/11, 9/11 therefore accentuated certain trends in the international system which were already underway, such as the French efforts to construct a multipolar world. Closer relations between Cuba and China have also developed following the collapse of the Soviet Union. But none of these efforts so far had turned out to be very successful. Instead, a form of bandwagoning has taken place as ex communist states have lined up to join NATO. For instance, as expected, a NATO summit meeting took place in Prague, the Czech Republic on November 21-22, 2002, resulted in an invitation for seven more former communist countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania) to join NATO. And on November 6, 2002, Georgia had also announced that it would like to join the military organization which was pushing eastward, while Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia were also waiting in line.

U.S.-Chinese Relations

U.S.-Chinese relations had worsened during the first 100 days of the Bush administration. American relations with China in the New Millennium are critical, since China is a rising power, from both an economic and military point of view. Liberal internationalists argue that the United States should pursue a policy of **constructive engagement** toward China, supporting its entry into the World Trade Organization, and granting it permanent normal trading relations with the United States, while at the same time criticizing its human rights record. (The Chinese celebrated the failure of the United States to be elected to a seat in the UN Human Rights Commission in May 2001 as a defeat for American "hegemonism".) Clinton's policy of constructive engagement with China was based upon the notion of involving Beijing in the international trading system, hoping that this would contribute to the liberalization of the regime while at the same time opening up China's huge market to American business interests and allowing them to compete in a more equitable fashion with European and Japanese competitors.

Containment

The Bush administration seems to prefer taking a harder line than Clinton in dealing with China, preferring the alternative strategy of containment. Although it should be remembered that Clinton, sent two aircraft carriers in 1998 in a show of support for Taiwan to deter Chinese threats, although the United States has always been very ambiguous as to whether it would intervene with military force to protect Taiwan from a Chinese invasion. Taiwan is one of the most sensitive areas in Chinese-American relations, since Beijing considers Taiwan to be a Chinese province, and a matter that falls strictly within its domestic jurisdiction. Bush committed a faux pas when he seemed to indicate that the U.S. would use military force to come to the aid of Taiwan.



The spy plane incident

Nonetheless, Bush showed that he could be flexible in defusing the crisis that erupted between Beijing and Washington when an American surveillance aircraft was forced to make an emergency landing on Chinese territory (Hainan island) following a collision which resulted in the death of a Chinese pilot in April 2001. The Chinese complaining that the U.S. aircraft was at fault for the crash, had violated Chinese sovereignty, held the crew of the downed aircraft, and demanded compensation and an apology from Washington. In a game that hinged around semantic diplomacy involving the translation of English into Chinese, President Bush sent a letter to the Beijing leadership in which the Americans said that they were very sorry for the incident, which the Chinese interpreted as constituting an apology. The crew was released, the plane remained in Chinese hands, and U.S. surveillance flights were resumed off the coast of China, supposedly without any fighter escorts. In the final analysis, the new administration views China as a strategic competitor rather than a strategic partner.

However, it is important to point out that U.S.-Chinese relations experienced a significant improvement after 9/11, when Beijing expressed its support for Washington's "war against terrorism", since China also found itself faced with an Islamic fundamentalist rebellion in the Northwestern part of its territory as well, with links to the Al Qaeda network headed by Osama Bin Laden. In 2002, the outgoing President of China even was hosted by Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. But the Chinese also joined the effort to create a multipolar system that could counter American efforts at global hegemony.

U.S.-Russian Relations

The United States has attempted to construct a strategic partnership with Russia during the Clinton administration. However, U.S. relations with Russia during the Bush administration at first seemed to deteriorate. Russia seemed to be moving in an increasingly authoritarian direction under the Presidential leadership of ex-KGB spy Vladimir Putin, Boris Yeltsin's successor. Putin has initiated a crackdown on Russia's financial oligarchs, individuals who were able to enrich themselves during the economic transition from communism to capitalism, and who wielded enormous power during the Yeltsin administration. Putin is also cracking down on the media, some of it owned by the oligarchs.

Russia is also involved in suppressing a revolution in the Republic of Chechnya which is located inside of the Russian Federation, and engaging in massive human rights violations in doing so. Russia seems to basically pacified Chechnya by 2007. Russia also, as weak as it is, stung by its loss of status as a Great Power, is still trying to maintain a semblance of influence and power throughout the former Soviet Union as well as adjacent areas of strategic interest. It maintains military bases and forces in Georgia and Moldova both ostensibly independent states that were once part of the former Soviet Union. It sent thousands of troops to prop up a government in a civil war that raged in Tajikistan, bordering Afghanistan in Central Asia. In Central Asia, the United States and Russia have clashing interests over the exploitation of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea Basin. The Russians have expressed their concern about the presence of US forces participating in the war against terror, in what they consider their sphere of influence,

Russia is still a nuclear weapons state and possesses thousands of nuclear weapons which are capable of destroying the U.S. American relations with Russia have also been strained because Russia continues to sell nuclear technology to Iran, and opposed U.S. efforts to maintain economic sanctions against Iraq, as well as the US decision to launch a preemptive war against



Saddam Hussein, in an effort to promote regime change, and reconfigure the geopolitical balance in the Middle East. Finally, the Bush administration did not hold an early Summit meeting with Putin, and at first tended to downgrade the importance of Russia. At first it seemed as if President Bush attached more importance to relations with Mexico and Canada (important sources of American energy) and much closer from a geographical point of view, than relations with Moscow.

However, Bush struck up a warm personal relationship with Putin in a series of summit meetings. Furthermore, the terrorist attack of 9/11 also resulted in a distinct improvement in relations between Moscow and Washington, although the Bush administration was more determined than ever to go ahead with the construction of a National Missile Defense system. Russia and the United States found a common cause in the war against terrorism, with the Russians pointing out that they had been fighting Islamic Fundamentalists in Chechnya for years. Even though Moscow still considered the Central Asian successor states of the former Soviet Union as falling within their sphere of influence, (as Russia created the Eurasian Economic Organization) they permitted the United States to establish bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to wage the war in Afghanistan. The Americans have tried to reassure the Russians that they have no intention of establishing permanent bases in the area.

NATO Enlargement

A major point of contention between Moscow and Washington is the expansion of NATO eastward. With the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, we have seen an expansion of NATO's mission. NATO was originally set up as a collective defense organization at the beginning of the Cold War to defend Western Europe from a Soviet attack. With the end of the Cold War, we have seen the expansion of NATO eastward into the power vacuum that was created by the collapse of communist power in Central Europe, with the addition of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in March 1999. By 2002, the Bush administration had to decide what East European countries to include in the next wave of expansion, if any. Moscow was adamantly opposed to the admission of the Baltic Republics to NATO, considering them as falling within a Red Line that cannot be crossed. There was some support in the United States for admitting Lithuania to NATO as a first step. Other leading candidates for the second wave of NATO expansion were Slovenia and Slovakia, while Romania and Bulgaria at first seemed to be on the backburner due to their lagging record in economic reforms. Macedonia and Albania also desire to join NATO as well. However, Romanian and Bulgarian prospects for NATO membership improved following 9/11. Romania's prospects for NATO membership improved because it also was a Black Sea state, occupying a favorable geopolitical position vis-a-vis the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as the Middle East (given the reluctance of Turkey and Saudi Arabia to become involved in a war against Iraq) which had assumed increasing importance in American strategy within the context of the war in Afghanistan. There was not very much that Moscow could do to stop the enlargement of NATO to the east, as mentioned previously.

While at the same time the Bush administration supported NATO expansion from the Baltics to the Balkans, which exacerbated its relations with Russia. Washington would like to cut back the U.S. troop presence in the Balkans, slowly and in consultation with its NATO allies. After 9/11, there has been a downsizing of US forces in the Balkans, as the Europeans have increasingly assumed responsibility for security there. (such as the deployment of an EU force in Macedonia as mentioned previously) This also contributed to the decision to invite the two Balkan states of Romania and Bulgaria to join NATO at the Prague summit which met in November 2002.



The Bush administration believes that U.S. troops should only be used in conflicts that are vital to the national interest of the United States (such as the Persian Gulf conflict 1990-1991) and Iraq in 2003. The U.S. should not overextend its military in conflicts which are marginal to U.S. interests, as the Pentagon warned that the US was engaging in military overstretch.

U.S. and Northeast Asia

Along with Europe, it could be argued that Northeast Asia constitutes another area of vital interest to the United States. In the case of Japan, the U.S. has put pressure on Tokyo to put its economic house in order and also would like Japan to pick up a greater burden for its own military defense. Japanese-American relations in 2001 were strained further when a U.S. nuclear powered submarine accidentally crashed into a Japanese fishing vessel, resulting in Japanese fatalities.

The Bush administration has taken a less conciliatory approach than Clinton in dealing with North Korea's efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability and delivery system. Initially, the Bush administration had also discouraged South Korea's "sunshine" policy of promoting reconciliation between the two Koreas, but softened its stand on this issue somewhat later. However, relations between the United States and North Korea suffered a further setback when President Bush referred to North Korea as a member of an "axis of evil" along with Iraq and Iran, in his State of the Union message which was delivered in 2002. Relations between these two countries worsened in 2002 when North Korea announced that it had developed nuclear weapons in violation of the Framework Agreement which it had concluded with the United States in 1994. The US decision to engage in a preventive war against Iraq in 2003 also resulted in a significant increase in tension with North Korea, as the North Koreans announced that they were withdrawing from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and resuming the production of nuclear weapons. By 2003, North Korea was threatening nuclear war, as speculation revolved around whether or not it had been able to produce more nuclear weapons.

The Middle East

There is also a stark contrast between the frenetic efforts of the Clinton administration to broker a peace settlement in the Middle East, and the initially rather passive approach which has been taken by the Bush team. However, 9/11 forced the Bush administration to become more actively involved in trying to revive the effort to arrive at a peace settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis, particularly because this roiled relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, as the tit-for-tat spiral of violence escalated out of control there. The urgency that Washington be seen as actively involved in the peace process there stemmed from the need for the U.S. to demonstrate that the "war against terrorism" was not a war against Islam. The United States needed to persuade moderate Islamic states that this was the case. By March 2002, it was clear that U.S. efforts aimed at promoting a peace settlement in the Middle East had failed, but a plan proposed by the Saudis generated a considerable amount of interest. The Saudi plan would have the Israelis withdraw from all of the territories occupied since the Six Day War in 1967, in return for the normalization of relations with its Arab neighbors. After the Iraq-US war in 2003, President Bush engaged in a major effort to persuade the Israelis and Palestinians to adhere to an American sponsored roadmap for peace. Unfortunately, efforts to implement this road map to peace were undermined by the launching of a series of suicide bombing attacks in Israel by Hamas, and ferocious retaliatory attacks by Israel.

Africa



With the end of the Cold war and the debacle in Somalia in 1993 in which a number of U.S. troops were killed, the United States has not shown much interest in Africa, which is being ravished by AIDS and resource wars. The United States did very little in 1994 while genocide was committed in Rwanda, even at first shrinking from using the word genocide as the killing of about 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus took place in the space of about ten weeks.

It seemed that while regional wars raged in Africa in such countries as Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United States was absent from the scene. But perhaps because Sierra Leone was seen as falling within the British sphere of influence, while the French had been able to secure recognition that the Democratic Republic of the Congo fell within the French sphere of influence, as in the summer of 2003 France led an EU multinational force with a limited mandate to try and stabilize the conflict there.

As mentioned previously, we are interested in tracing the effects which 9/11 has had upon the international system, and especially the role of the hegemonic power in that system, which is the United States. It is rather clear that 9/11 did have an effect upon the relations between the administration of President George Bush and the continent. In this connection, Africa assumed a new strategic importance for the United States in the war against terror. The new strategy of the Bush administration put an emphasis on strengthening bilateral relations with selected African states, although it should also be pointed out that President Bush had met a significant number of African leaders during his first few years in office. Another strategic concern of the Bush administration was to strengthen regional and subregional organizations in Africa as well.

Most important of all was the war against terror. The Bush administration set aside in 2003 \$100 million to help East African governments fight terrorism. It should also be remembered that the leader of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden had found refuge in the Sudan in the 1990s (a country which had been categorized by the United States as a sponsor of state terrorism) until he was forced to move by the Sudanese government, as a result of American pressure, to Afghanistan.

The US administration, in a post 9/11 reassessment of its relationship with Africa, apparently came to the realization that the best way to fight terrorism was to prevent states from failing. As the US discovered in the case of Afghanistan, failed states offered a fertile environment for the flourishing of terrorism. As the Pentagon also reconfigured its military doctrine to fight the war against terrorism, part of the Revolution in Military Affairs was to focus on the deployment of lighter and more flexible forces in various parts of Africa, in order to be in a better position to move against the hydra like Al Qaeda organization, which had not been destroyed after the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan. For example, a US military base had been set up in the country of Djibouti, located in the strategically important Horn of Africa.

In early July, 2003, President Bush undertook his first official visit to Africa, stopping at five countries: Senegal, the Republic of South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, and Botswana. To some extent, it could be said that the Presidential visit to Africa was motivated by idealism, in terms of democracy promotion. The export of democracy had formed a basic theme in Clintonian foreign policy, and therefore represents an element of continuity which forms an important part of President Bush's foreign policy as well. For instance, the five countries which were selected for President Bush's visit in July 2003, were supposed to be models of democracy. President Bush's visit in this regard, represented an effort to project what prominent political scientist Joseph Nye has dubbed soft power. The United States can influence other countries based on the values of its system and way of life, not just political, but economic as well. For example, President Bush also urged African countries to adopt a market economic system.



The Bush administration has also focused on providing aid to African nations to fight the scourge of AIDS, which has especially devastated sub-Saharan Africa. The Bush administration had initiated a program that was slated to provide \$15 billion dollars to fight AIDS in Africa, a disease which was ravaging and destroying a number of African countries. (although Uganda, one of the countries visited by Bush, was making progress in the implementation of a successful anti-AIDS program, Botswana was being decimated by AIDS)

Another problem which faced the US was dealing with the ruinous civil conflicts which were rampant in Africa in the decade following the end of the Cold War. For example, during his trip to Africa in the summer of 2003, President Bush faced pressure from the international community to intervene in the Liberian civil conflict, which had cost thousands of lives. However, the US was reluctant to intervene with large numbers of troops in Liberia because its military was overextended in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia. Furthermore, there still was the memory of the disaster which had befallen American troops in Somalia in 1993, even though there was considerable pressure being exerted on Washington to do something to prevent another Rwandan like genocide from taking place in Liberia. It looked as if the Bush administration preferred to support a peacekeeping operation undertaken by West African states through the subregional organization known as the West African Community of States. .

But it should also be pointed out that the United States was interested in increasing the amount of oil which it imported from Africa, in its efforts to reduce its dependence on Saudi Arabia. For example, the West African state of Guinea, a source of oil exports to the US, was located in the same geographical area as Liberia. The stabilization of Liberia would serve US national interests.

The Western Hemisphere

The United States continues to view the Western hemisphere as a region which falls within its sphere of influence, as Washington finds itself embroiled in the drug wars of Colombia and is committed to spending about 1.6 billion dollars there over a two year period. The goal of the Bush administration is to create a vast free trade area in the region. This policy unfortunately has stimulated fears of U.S. hegemony, as expressed most forcefully by Cuba and Venezuela. Furthermore, President Chavez of Venezuela, since his election in 1998, faced with growing internal opposition, has tended to pursue a policy which has been rather critical of the United States. Recently, Venezuela had tended to be more sympathetic toward Iraqi efforts to lift the economic sanctions that have been imposed on it by the international community, has opposed US efforts to increase OPEC oil production to keep the price of oil down, and has subsidized the oil which it exports to Cuba. Furthermore, the economic collapse of Argentina in 2001, called into question the efforts on the part of the Bush administration to create a free trade area in Latin America. Prior to 9/11, the Bush administration had also focused on relations with Mexico as a priority, given the fact that Mexico has emerged as a major trading partner of the United States. The US was also encouraged by the end of the rule of the dominant Mexican political party, known as the PRI, and the triumph of the opposition led by Vicente Fox. However, since then, problems still continue to roil the relationship between Mexico and the United States, ranging from disagreements over the extent to which each is complying with NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), and the resolution of such issues as immigration and drug trafficking. Generally, US-Latin American relations have suffered a downturn since 9/11, as the US has neglected its neighbors in the Western hemisphere to focus on the war against terror.