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INTRODUCTION

The view from the twenty-first century

Why study the Clinton administration and its grand strategy initiative? In the years since it left office, tumultuous events have occurred that suggest its time in power belongs in a previous era. The attacks of September 11 (9/11), wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as domestic clashes over healthcare and the economy raise doubts about the continued relevance of Clinton's time in office and imply that if the end of the Cold War marked *The End of History*, then perhaps 9/11 constituted its recommencement. Those who lament President Clinton's apparent disengagement with foreign affairs and the supposed absence of a discernable Clinton Doctrine exacerbate this sentiment. In their view, there is all too little to study and too few reasons to do so, except perhaps as a cautionary tale. Such views, however, are fundamentally flawed.

Bill Clinton had a natural inclination toward domestic politics, but this did not mean he was disinterested in world affairs. He attended Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, served on the staff of Senator Fulbright, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and studied at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. These are not the actions of someone disinterested in the outside world. However, notwithstanding his education, Bill Clinton's tenure as governor of Arkansas and requisite focus on domestic affairs left him vulnerable to the charge of being unqualified to preside over a challenging period in global history following the end of the Cold War.

The Clinton administration came to power as the global environment became less stable and more dangerous and was forced to address a new geopolitical environment "with no rules and no patterns."¹ Communism's collapse heralded not an era of peace, but a time of uncertainty, as President

Clinton sought to “find a role for an America that [could] neither dominate nor retreat.”² The administration’s external challenges were compounded by internal struggles, as its efforts to devise a grand strategy were hindered by bureaucratic sensibilities, personal rivalries, and intense partisanship in Washington, DC. Despite these difficulties, the Clinton administration produced a series of strategic documents in line with congressional requirements that revealed the continuing intent behind its grand strategy. Issues of globalization, international trade, the rise of China, and the emergence of the European Union were all addressed as the administration recalibrated the US global role in the aftermath of the Cold War.

This book considers the development of policy on the Clinton presidential campaign and the manner in which this was enacted in office as US Grand Strategy between January 1993 and January 2001. It addresses the development of Clinton’s Grand Strategy and the manner in which this was influenced by the individuals who devised it and the events that helped to shape it. This, therefore, is not a book driven by events, or an attempt to chronicle every foreign policy decision taken by the Clinton administration; those seeking a strict chronological account of Clinton’s foreign policy initiatives must look elsewhere. Neither is this an attempt to contort the administration’s policies into an abstract theoretical framework, nor arcane conceptual constructs. It is, instead, a political history of the effort to devise and implement US Grand Strategy in the post-Cold War world and of the individuals responsible for this. This book provides an insight into the previously underappreciated coherence that underpinned US Grand Strategy in the 1990s; what it was, how it worked, what and who drove it, and what it sought to achieve. This book addresses a number of key areas: first, the administration’s commitment to a series of key principles that were extolled on the campaign trail and implemented in office; secondly, the importance of personality and bureaucratic sensibilities in the formulation of policy; finally, it notes that regardless of well-intended ideas, global events have a habit of making a mockery of well-laid plans.

This book draws extensively on primary material, including speeches by the principals, National Security Strategy Reports, documentation from the National Security Council, Presidential Decision Directives, Presidential Review Documents, as well as newly declassified materials from the Clinton Presidential Library. Interviews with senior members of the administration have been conducted, revealing the development and implementation of policy from deep within the West Wing of the Clinton White House. These new commentaries provide an insight into the nature of the interpersonal politics of the Clinton White House, as former members of the administration reflect not only on the policy they devised, but also on the reaction to it and the manner in which it was implemented.

This book focuses on “declaratory” grand strategy, using the National Security Strategy documents as both a guide to analyze policy, and a structural device through which to consider the emerging policies. At the

heart of this book is President Clinton's replacement of Containment with the grand strategy of Engagement and Enlargement. This was based on three elements first espoused on the campaign trail in December 1991, which sought to "tear down the wall in . . . thinking between domestic and foreign policy."³ These were enhanced security, prosperity promotion, and democracy promotion. There was an important and overlooked link between these elements that remained in place throughout Clinton's presidency: by stressing the need to enhance US national security, the administration sought to prove that Democrats could be trusted with security issues, reduce global tensions and as a result, cut the defense budget; the promotion of prosperity sought increased exports to new overseas markets, higher wages, lower unemployment, and rising confidence on Wall Street, all vital for a successful 1996 reelection campaign; finally, democracy promotion ensured the United States would "stand up for democracy," promised open markets, and reduced global tension, building on the benefits of the first two initiatives.⁴ This trinity embraced and advanced American values and deliberately combined foreign and domestic initiatives to utilize the strengths and reduce the perceived weakness of President Clinton in the international arena.

These issues will be examined sequentially in the following chapters. Chapter one addresses the tensions between the development of foreign and domestic policy on Clinton's 1992 campaign and the challenges that this caused once in office. The chapter addresses the process of developing strategy in a campaign setting and the role it played during the debates. The chapter analyzes the individuals who advised Governor Clinton during the campaign and the role they played in preparing him for power. The chapter examines Clinton's campaign speeches on foreign affairs and dissects their importance and meaning, both domestically and internationally, as foreign governments began to take note of what the candidate said on the future direction of US Grand Strategy.

Having considered the development of policy on the campaign trail, chapter two addresses the first months of the Clinton administration as it came to power, sought to adjust to its newfound role, and was seen to flounder in its initial steps on the world stage. President George H. W. Bush had spoken of a New World Order; however, the world he bequeathed Bill Clinton was best characterized by its total lack of order, as the authority of the United States was tested in ways that could not have been imagined only 4 years previously. The chapter analyzes President Clinton's first foreign policy speeches to discern the new directions to be adopted and the structural alterations that the Clinton administration introduced.

Chapter three considers the various approaches to grand strategy that emerged during 1993 and 1994. The chapter considers the individuals responsible for their development, their personal focus, and the speeches that shaped policy. The eventual grand strategy of Engagement and Enlargement was drawn from Bill Clinton's campaign speeches, the ambitions of his

advisers, and done so, partly, to maximize Clinton's economic interests and reduce focus on his lack of foreign policy experience. The chapter considers the extent to which the Clinton administration redefined US Grand Strategy in a manner that recognized that a new era was beginning, just as an old one was ending.

With a new grand strategy having been devised, the following three chapters assess its core pillars and consider their implementation: chapter four addresses the national security component of grand strategy and the extent to which events in Somalia and Rwanda impacted the administration as the realities of power encroached upon the theoretical construct of policy. The chapter also addresses the decision to expand NATO and the importance of this to Clinton's Grand Strategy.

Chapter five considers the decision to place prosperity promotion at the heart of grand strategy. The chapter addresses the concept's implications as the administration steered the nation out of recession and into the longest period of sustained growth in the twentieth century. The policy depended, in part, on access to sensitive data and, therefore, the chapter addresses the use of the CIA to assist American business and thereby bolster the economy. The chapter addresses the decision to support Mexico during the Peso crisis and the administration's structural alterations to the executive branch, including the creation of the National Economic Council (NEC). The chapter demonstrates the domestic implications of policy, as efforts to open foreign markets to US goods and services led to a need for more American jobs to feed the growing international appetite, resulting in a decline in unemployment figures and a booming economy.

Chapter six addresses the most contentious element of Clinton's Grand Strategy: democracy promotion. The chapter examines the administration's dedication to the policy, the bureaucratic clashes that threatened its implementation, and the degree to which it was accomplished. The chapter considers the extent to which this policy was a step too far for key members of the administration and how this influenced the degree to which it was implemented. The chapter addresses the implications of this policy on global regions and how the war in Bosnia became a focal point for US diplomatic efforts.

Having addressed the evolution and execution of Clinton's Grand Strategy, chapter seven considers its overall impact and implications. The chapter considers the fact that while America was certainly engaged abroad, few Americans had any idea with whom the nation was engaged, nor why it was so engaged, with the world apparently at peace. The chapter notes that the Clinton administration brought 8 years of stability and economic growth that was accompanied by a lack of clear sense of mission or national reason. At the time this seemed unimportant, but in retrospect it is clear that it was a harbinger for tough times ahead and that perhaps too little was done to prepare a populace for the brewing storms that waited in the twenty-first century.

This book directly challenges the claim by John Lewis Gaddis that there was “an absence of any grand design,” or that there was “a kind of incrementalism and *ad-hocism* to things” and, instead, reveals a hitherto unexplored continuity of core policies from October 1991 to January 2001.⁵ These policies must be examined, and the relationship between them understood, to appreciate the true nature of US Grand Strategy in the 1990s. Too little consideration has so far been paid to the interconnectivity of Clinton’s policy initiatives, which redefined the direction of US Grand Strategy in the 1990s. Instead, critics have lamented a decade of lost opportunities and confused initiatives, during which the United States allegedly lacked purpose and direction.⁶ This has been exacerbated by an inability of former administration officials to explain their grand strategy initiative adequately in their memoirs. Accordingly, studies of the Clinton administration to date have failed to consider the evolution of policy and the impact of events on its formulation, ensuring that Clinton’s efforts remain misunderstood and their lasting impact underappreciated.⁷

By covering the entire duration of Clinton’s presidential odyssey, from his 1991 Announcement Speech to his final day in office, this work covers the evolution of policy on the 1992 campaign, the staffing of foreign policy posts during the transition, and the manner in which events influenced the evolution of policy and how the evolution of policy impacted events. Through it all, the roles played by key individuals are considered to provide a telling insight into the implementation of US Grand Strategy under President Clinton.

The Clinton administration devised US Grand Strategy for the post-Cold War world that moved beyond a preponderance of power, to embrace ideas that were both radical and yet quintessentially American; that ethics should count in foreign policy; and that how other nations ruled their own people should matter to the United States. It placed the free movement of people, capital, and ideas at the heart of foreign policy and sought to lock the United States into an ever-increasing number of global entities. The Clinton administration’s grand strategy was the tale of years of toil and planning that did not necessarily develop as expected, but which made for a fascinating spectacle, whose legacy continues to impact the world many years after leaving office.

Notes

- 1 Author’s interview with Leon Fuerth (National Security Adviser to Vice-President Gore, 1993–2001), George Washington University, Washington, DC, June 8, 2004.
- 2 Henry Kissinger, “Clinton and the World,” *Newsweek* 121, no. 5 (February 1, 1993), p. 45.

- 3 William J. Clinton, "A New Covenant for American Security," speech at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, December 12, 1991, in Stephen A. Smith (ed.), *Preface to the Presidency: Selected Speeches of Bill Clinton 1974–1992* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), p. 113.
- 4 William J. Clinton, "Strategic Security in a Changing World," speech at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, California, August 13, 1992, in Smith (ed.), *Preface to the Presidency*, p. 271.
- 5 John Lewis Gaddis, quoted in John F. Harris, "Despite 'Lessons,' Clinton Still Seen Lacking Strategy," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1999, p. A15.
- 6 For critical analysis of the Clinton administration's foreign policy initiatives, see William G. Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999); Linda B. Miller, "The Clinton Years: Reinventing Foreign Policy," *International Affairs* 70 (October 1994), pp. 621–634; Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 1 (January–February 1996), pp. 16–32; Joshua Muravchik, "Carrying a Small Stick," *National Review* (September 2, 1996), pp. 57–62; William G. Hyland, "A Mediocre Record," *Foreign Policy* 101 (Winter 1995–1996), pp. 69–74; Richard H. Ullman, "A Late Recovery," *Foreign Policy* 101 (Winter 1995–1996), pp. 75–79.
- 7 All too few scholars have attempted to address a broad analysis of the Clinton administration's foreign engagements to date. Rare exceptions include John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes, 1992–2000* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009) and Richard Sale, *Clinton's Secret Wars: The Evolution of a Commander in Chief* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009).