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## **How the George W. Bush Administration Made Conflict Resolution Obsolete**

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### **1. Introduction**

Where do I begin?

In 2000 the last year for Americans feeling comfortable and secure at home, the newly elected President George W. Bush promised Americans and the rest of the world that under his new administration he would promote bipartisan, peace, and mediation to address not just America's concerns, but the world's as well. Then 9/11 changed everything! Forever! President Bush would not only break all promises made pre 9/11, he and his administration would break the law on every level of government. From national laws in the U.S. Constitution that have governed America for more than two-hundred years to international conflict resolution laws that have lasted for more than a millennium, Mr. Bush violated them.

In this paper I will present how former President George W. Bush and his administration in less than a decade nearly destroyed what took more than a millennium to build--Conflict Resolution in the world.

### **2. Prelude to the Presidency**

"I don't have any idea about foreign affairs," George W. Bush told Condoleezza Rice while he was Governor of Texas but angling for the Presidency. "This isn't what I do." (Bob Woodward, ***State of Denial***. 2006) Dr. Rice was hired to tutor him.

A trip to the Middle East was initiated in December 1998 to introduce Mr. Bush to the region. In a helicopter trip with Israel's Ariel Sharon over Israel and the Occupied Territories, Bush declared the place a mess in which the United States should distant itself from getting involved. In the early months of the Bush administration, Bush's only Middle East

**Anthony P. Johnson, C.Phil, Nova Southeastern University**

concern was Saddam Hussein and his alleged weapons of mass destruction. Shortly after 9/11, Bush asked members of his administration to find any link between 9/11 and Saddam with all expediency. There were no links! Still, Bush pressed on with a two-front strategy press:

1. ***Uprooting al-Qaeda from Afghanistan.***
2. ***Removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq.***

In 2001, Iran was disrobing from the radicalism and had begun to modernize. It created two openings to the Bush administration to mediate for a peaceful resolution to the conflict that was still simmering in the Middle East. First, Iran provided tactical and intelligence support to the American effort in Afghanistan because Iran opposes the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Secondly, Iran offered diplomatic relations to the U.S. Here was an opportunity for Mr. Bush to befriend Iran, but instead he took the "antagonistic" approach. In his 2002 State of the Union address, Bush included Iran in the "Axis of Evil," with North Korea and Iraq.

Iran rapidly radicalized again, and in 2005 elected the apathetic and callous Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President whose ideology is that the only good Jew is a dead Jew!

### **3. The Road Map for Peace**

According to Pierre Tristam, (***Bush's Road Map for Peace: Five Years Later.*** 2007), two years before he became President, George W. Bush viewed the Palestinian territories. Bush called what he saw below "Palestinian camps" and said, according to Paul O'Neil, who was briefly his treasury secretary: "Looked real bad down there. I don't see much we can do over there at this point. I think it's time to pull out of that situation." There it was. The United States would disengage from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, leaving it to Israelis and Palestinians to battle it out. It was a fateful decision with bloody consequences. In the last days of his presidency, Bill Clinton attempted to broker a peace agreement between Israel's Ehud Barak and the Palestinian Authority's Yasser Arafat at Camp David. The negotiations failed. A second intifada, or uprising, broke out in the Occupied Territories (the first stretched between 1987 and

*How the George W. Bush Administration Made Conflict Resolution Obsolete*

1993. By spring 2002, blood was flowing in Palestinian and Israeli streets. Bush's hands-off approach had failed.

He delivered a pair of speeches on April 4 and June 24, 2002 -- that was known as his "*Road Map for Peace in the Middle East.*" Five years later, it's the road yet not taken. (Pierre Tristam, ***Bush's Road Map for Peace: Five Years Later.*** 2007).

Bush spoke in Washington as smoke rose from Palestinian and Israeli streets.

He called on Israelis to stop incursions into Palestinian territories and the Palestinian Authority to stop supporting terrorism, warning that "suicide bombing missions could well blow up the best and only hope for a Palestinian state."

But he also twice made positive reference to a Saudi peace plan launched in February 2002, which called for Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders in exchange for full diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia--and, the Saudi plan implied, the rest of the Arab world. By the time of his June speech, Bush dropped references to the Saudi peace plan. He didn't refer to suicide bombings as such, but as "homicide bombings," a clear indication of a more hawkish stance. And he called on Palestinians to get rid of Yasser Arafat and find "leaders not compromised by terror." While still scolding Israel for its incursions in Palestinian territories, Bush limited his calls on Israeli forces to withdrawing "to positions they held prior to September 28 2000." As violence subsides, he said, "Freedom of movement should be restored." But most burdens for peace were placed on Palestinians.

"And to those who would try to use the current crisis as an opportunity to widen the conflict," Bush warned, "stay out." (Pierre Tristam, ***Bush's Road Map for Peace: Five Years Later.*** July, 2007). But Bush himself strengthened and widened the conflict a year later with the invasion of Iraq, which further inflamed resentments in the Arab street and fed into long-standing distrust of Western intentions. According to Pierre Tristam, the war's evolution from an attempt to create democracy to merely keep a nation from exploding into sectarian mayhem undermined Bush's claim to Palestinians that he expected "better leadership" and "results."

**Anthony P. Johnson, C.Phil, Nova Southeastern University**

By 2007, with largely ineffective Condoleezza Rice as secretary of state, the Road Map was history. In addition to making matters more chaotic, suicide attacks in Israel have diminished slightly, but Gaza and the West Bank are entirely walled off economically from Israel, and will soon be physically walled off as well.

The "abject poverty" Bush referred to in his speeches is a fact of daily life for many Palestinians, who must contend with unemployment and severe restrictions on movement. "Palestinians traveling within the West Bank," The New York Times reported in November 2006," now face 542 obstacles, 83 of which are guarded by soldiers, compared with fewer than 400 a year ago." (Pierre Tristam, ***Bush's Road Map for Peace: Five Years Later***. 2007).

#### **4. Insufficient Clarity and Unreachable Goals**

While Bush's initiative was called a "Road Map for Peace," neither speech actually laid out the "how" of Bush's "what." Pierre Tristam said Bush was comfortable making emphatic statements ("I expect better leadership and I expect results"). He endorsed a two-state solution. As usually in his presidency, he was less prepared to address the underlying issues encouraging Palestinians turmoil and violence: The Israeli settlements, the state of siege in the Occupied Territories, the economic stranglehold Israeli strictures kept on Palestinians, whose ability to work in Israel was severely reduced.

Bush also spoke of peace being within reach as long as Palestinians developed democratic institutions on the Western model: Parliamentary institutions, separation of powers, and an independent judiciary. Bush saw those ideals as a foundation not only for peace between Israel and Palestine, but also as an inspiration for "millions of men and women around the globe who are weary of poverty and oppression."

Those were laudable goals, with a lack of clarity and also contradictory. According to Pierre Tristam, Bush had sympathized with "despair of the Palestinian people" for

*How the George W. Bush Administration Made Conflict Resolution Obsolete*

being "treated as pawns in the Middle East." Wasn't he now treating them as inspirational pawns?

## **5. The Torture of Children under George W. Bush**

As the debate continues on whether the Department of Justice criminal investigation may be justified in respect to the conduct and the behavior of George W. Bush and members of his administration. According to PS Burton (***The Torture of Children under George W. Bush***, 2009) the abuse, torture and killing of children seem to stand out as the most morally repugnant allegations, and as fate would have it, they seem to be the charges for which we have the best evidence to indict and obtain conviction. This is an area more or less ignored by main stream media and very few Americans are aware the George W. Bush authorized rendition and detentions of children as enemy combatants. There is documented evidence of incidents that his administration allowed children of high profile terrorists to be utilized as leverage to extract confessions and cooperation. The irony is the information was supplied by the Bush administration in 2008 at the United Nations. A large number of human rights organizations were saying that the United States was responsible for the detainment and disappearance of thousands (more than 10,000 according to some estimates) of children in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bush and his administration, assured the United Nations the figure was more in the 2,500 range and that they could account for most of them. According to P.S. Burton, George Bush ordered his people to encourage Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's cooperation and confession by "detaining and interrogating" the terrorists two children ages 7 and 9. No longer President, George W. Bush continue to insist that the lawyers at the United States Justice Department informed him that everything he did was legal and that no one was ever tortured while President of the United States.

There is speculation that even Americans who are comfortable with the torture of suspected terrorists to obtain information do not support the use of torture on children. Reliable sources confirmed that at one point, 64 children were sent to Guantánamo Bay. Without a doubt one can agree that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was a terrorist, but

**Anthony P. Johnson, C.Phil, Nova Southeastern University**

how did Bush, Cheney and others in his administration ever embrace the ideology that they could maneuver and manipulate a jury of their peers, that it was justified in “torturing” the man’s children?

Have we become the very individuals we loathe...terrorists? Many Americans still have not viewed the videos from Abu Ghraib, the ones that show American guards and a female of about 13years old pleading in vain for her brother who was being held in another cell to help her as she was being stripped naked and beaten severely. I’m curious as to how many former members of the Bush administration will “vehemently” defend against the overwhelming evidence that they participated in children being coerced into confessions, and denied access to lawyers while irrefutable evidence of their innocence was suppressed if they are ever be brought to trial to account for their atrocities.

Ironically, a court system that follows the human rights that they would receive—the very court system and freedoms they so vicariously denied so many others.

Conversely, According to P S Brown, (***The Torture of Children under George W. Bush.*** 2009) in his final interviews, George W. Bush was never asked about the rendition, detention, and abuse of children in American-run prisons in the “war on terror.”

It appears that we must begin to question, investigate, and hold accountable all of those who are responsible for war crimes against humanity. There can be no justice until justice is served!

## **6. The Preamble... According to George W. Bush**

We the People...”We” meaning Me, Myself and I of the United States, in order to form a more “Dictatorial Union,” established injustice, ensured domestic chaos in which I lied, cheated, stole, tortured, and spied on the very people I was supposed to serve. I provided for me and my cronies’ defense the bankrupting America, promoted general warfare on the poor, homeless, hungry, weak, sick and defenseless Americans I was supposed to protect, and secured the blessings and liberty to me, my cronies, as well as special interest groups such as Wall Street and my own posterity. I

*How the George W. Bush Administration Made Conflict Resolution Obsolete*

did ordain and establish this George W. Bush Doctrine for the United States of America.

## **7. Final Thoughts**

George Bush was the epitome of a failed President. After 9/11, Democrats and Independents alike were ready to accept him as our leader--but he failed to act. He failed to be a leader to America! He failed to be a leader to those who gave and continue to give their lives for freedom. He failed to be truthful. He failed to bring balance to the Democrats, Republicans, and Independent parties. He failed to bolster Americas crumbling fiscal and infrastructure!

“If failure was a virtue... Mr. Bush would be its brightest star.”

## **References**

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