

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

(As published in the Atlantic Magazine with annotations in italics by Jim Fallows, a former Democratic presidential speechwriter. Comments in red are mine.)

Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, fellow citizens:

Every year, by law and by custom, we meet here to consider the state of the union. This year, we gather in this chamber deeply aware of decisive days that lie ahead. You and I serve our country in a time of great consequence. During this session of Congress, we have the duty to reform domestic programs vital to our country ... and we have the opportunity to save millions of lives abroad from a terrible disease. We will work for a prosperity that is broadly shared ... and we will answer every danger and every enemy that threatens the American people. *[This whole paragraph is one of several artful answers to the main positioning challenge that President Bush faced in the speech: re-introducing himself as the "compassionate conservative" from the 2000 election campaign, and as a man who notices that the country has problems other than the threat from Iraq, North Korea, and al Qaeda. Final sentence of the paragraph touches all the necessary bases. —JF]*

In all these days of promise and days of reckoning, we can be confident. In a whirlwind of change, and hope, and peril, our faith is sure, our resolve is firm, and our union is strong. *[Here's the first modest surprise in the speech. The trademark line of every State of the Union address is the necessary announcement that "the State of the Union is ..." good, or strong, or robust, or whatever the incumbent wants to imply. In the tiny world of speechwriting, this is a "daring" innovation: using "our union" as opposed to the expected phrase "the state of the union."]*

This country has many challenges. We will not deny, we will not ignore, we will not pass along our problems to other Congresses, *[Phrase that could be problematic in the long run. The President means this to be read as an explanation for his seizing the nettle of the Iraq problem. But his budgetary plans do indeed pass to future Presidents and Congresses the challenge of figuring out how to pay for what he has proposed.]* other presidents, and other generations. We will confront them with focus, and clarity, and courage.

During the last two years, we have seen what can be accomplished when we work together. To lift the standards of our public schools, we achieved [historic education reform](#)—which must now be carried out in every school, and every classroom, so that every child in America can read, and learn, and succeed in life. *[See my comments on taxation, below. If the states were not facing their current budgetary problems and could enact reasonable taxation programs, we would not need these federal education reforms. You*

may remember from our prior correspondence (on the selective college admissions issue) that the schools my children attend have a very socio-economically diverse student population. We do not need more bureaucrats in Washington devising testing programs. We need money to hire multi-lingual teachers, not just for our Latin students, but for Asians, Eastern Europeans and Africans as well. Last year, my daughter (then 10 years old) was tasked by her fourth grade teacher with teaching a Korean child and a Japanese child, neither of whom spoke a word of English. My kid is very smart and resourceful, but I do not think her little charges were well served by the education system.] To protect our country, we reorganized our government and created the Department of Homeland Security—which is mobilizing against the threats of a new era. To bring our economy out of recession, we delivered the largest tax relief in a generation. To insist on integrity in American business, we passed tough reforms, and we are holding corporate criminals to account. *[The Constitution says that Presidents "shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union." This paragraph amounts to the President's description of what has happened so far on his watch. A President who has been in office longer or has more positive statistical news to report will devote many paragraphs to this task. Bill Clinton's last few SOTU addresses went on at length about job creation, crime statistics, deficit reduction, and so on.]*

Some might call this a good record. I call it a good start. *[Not sure about this line. It subliminally recalls too many offensive jokes whose punch line is, 'A good start.' Of course no respectable person would admit to having heard such jokes, for similar reasons I won't detail any of them here. Perhaps no one in the White House has ever heard them. Still, it's a wry line better foregone.]* Tonight I ask the House and Senate to join me in the next bold steps to serve our fellow citizens.

Our first goal is clear: We must have an economy that grows fast enough to employ every man and woman who seeks a job.

After recession, terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, and stock market declines, our economy is recovering—yet it is not growing fast enough, or strongly enough. *[Another artful sentence. Attributes the economic slowdown, which is the President's main political problem, to problems his Administration is attacking: terrorism and, with less vigor, corporate crime.]*

[I have never understood why our leaders cannot be more forthcoming about the source of economic problems. Our current economic malaise is not the result of terrorist attacks or corporate scandals. It is simply a fairly routine business cycle downturn exacerbated by gross misallocation of resources in the telecommunications and information technology sectors and the necessary, yet painful, effects of globalization]. With unemployment rising, our Nation needs more small businesses to open, more companies to invest and expand, more employers to put up the sign that says, "Help Wanted."

Jobs are created when the economy grows; the economy grows when Americans have more money to spend and invest; and the best, fairest way

to make sure Americans have that money is not to tax it away in the first place. *[Good politicians define problems in ways that make their preferred solutions seem the only logical choices. No one of any party could disagree with the first two parts of this sentence. With the third, the President moves toward the solution he has in mind.]* [The money of those who – net, net, net – pay taxes will be taxed away, but by the state.]

I am proposing that all the income tax reductions set for 2004 and 2006 be made permanent and effective this year. [Saying that tax reductions are “permanent” is meaningless. As a matter of law, the current Congress cannot tie the hands of future Congresses. If that were not the rule, our representative republic would come to an abrupt end in a big hurry.] And under my plan, as soon as I have signed the bill, this extra money will start showing up in workers' paychecks. Instead of gradually reducing the marriage penalty, we should do it now. Instead of slowly raising the child credit to a thousand dollars, we should send the checks to American families now. [The President and the Republicans are making a mistake by continuing to suggest that those who pay taxes should – for that reason alone – get a tax reduction. It plays right into the class war arguments when the truth is very different.]

For the modest wage earner, the response by the President's opponents will be exactly along the lines you suggest. Yet, *in the aggregate*, a reduction in federal taxation is not going to materially reduce the tax burden on the wealthy.

Government – federal, state and local – imposes the largest tax burden possible without engendering unacceptable economic consequences. The states are running record budget deficits. Reducing the federal tax burden on the wealthy will simply afford the states the opportunity to raise taxes to cover their budget deficits and to provide additional services. (Keep in mind that the wealthy are, after all, the only ones who – net, net, net – pay taxes. The modest wage earner receives far more in government services than he or she pays in taxes.) Any wealthy person with a fundamental understanding of political economy who believes there can be a material, non-transitory reduction in overall tax burden is delusional.

My state (Indiana) has a serious budget deficit. The *Republicans* proposed an income tax increase (0.25%), which was clearly the right answer. But the ultimate package that passed was a highly regressive program that included a 1% sales tax increase, a “lottery tax” (to supplement the income tax the lottery winners already have to pay), an increase in cigarette taxes, higher prices for riverboat casino admissions, etc. I can only assume that there are a lot of non-smoking, non-gambling Democratic voters in our state who do not realize how regressive the sales tax is. Anyway, a reduction in federal income taxation would perhaps make a fair and reasonable tax plan at the state level possible. Maybe that guy who makes \$40 thousand who is going

to get that \$1 thousand reduction would be more willing to spare an additional \$25 bucks in state income tax.

Bottom line: The Republicans would be much better off characterizing the tax debate as what it really is, a struggle for power between the federal government and the states.

This tax relief is for everyone who pays income taxes—and it will help our economy immediately. Ninety-two million Americans will keep – this year – an average of almost 1,100 dollars more of their own money. *[Prediction one: some columnist, soon, will point out that "average" figures are highly misleading here. A tax cut of \$1 million for one family, and zero for 999 other families, would mean "average" tax relief of \$1,000 per family. If the President is using these "average" figures, it must mean that any other way of describing the tax relief looks worse, from a class-war perspective.]* A family of four with an income of 40,000 dollars would see their federal income taxes fall from 1,178 dollars to 45 dollars per year. *[Prediction two: columnists will dig into this case as well. It is sure to have been carefully vetted in the Administration and is accurate on its own terms. The question is how typical it will turn out to be.]* And our plan will improve the bottom line for more than 23 million small businesses.

You, the Congress, have already passed all these reductions, and promised them for future years. If this tax relief is good for Americans three, or five, or seven years from now, it is even better for Americans today.

We also strengthen the economy by treating investors equally in our tax laws. It is fair to tax a company's profits. It is not fair to again tax the shareholder on the same profits. To boost investor confidence, and to help the nearly 10 million seniors who receive dividend income, I ask you to end the unfair double taxation of dividends. *[Another artful effort to define the problem in a useful way. Dividend-tax cuts favoring the wealthy? Not at all! It's for the "seniors."]* **[Both sides of the dividend tax debate have no vision. The benefits of an elimination of the tax inefficiencies that deter dividend payments will be enormous, yet nobody sees it.**

The nature of dividends will change. Rather than being small, relatively fixed amounts, they will become highly variable and much more common. Every company whose risk-adjusted return on equity is insufficient will be forced by the shareholders to pay out as much free cash flow as possible. Companies will, therefore, focus on generating cash flow, not GAAP earnings, and it is much harder to manipulate cash flow accounting. Stock prices will become more rational and equity markets more orderly. Corporate governance will improve because executives will get their incentive compensation quarterly in cash dividends from restricted stock, not from appreciation in stock price valued based on GAAP earnings. Also, companies will no longer have an incentive to make acquisitions simply to reinvest retained earnings that cannot be returned to the shareholders tax efficiently.

As for the class war arguments, while most dividend-yielding stock is currently held by wealthier folks, this may cease to be true. Young couples saving for a house or for their kids' college educations will find substantial cash dividends more attractive than (or at least competitive with) CDs or other investments. Under the current system, investor returns are largely based on stock price appreciation based on GAAP earnings that are difficult to predict and easily manipulated. This is too risky for most wage earners and something they don't really understand. Also, treating dividends as a cost of capital in the same way as interest may reinvigorate the ESOP as a viable organizational form.

The Bush plan, however, has several flaws.

First, dividends should be deductible by the corporation and taxable to the recipient, not the other way around. The class warriors have a point about the Bush plan (although I have not seen any of them articulate it yet). Making dividends excludible from the recipient's taxable income means that the modest wage earner is effectively paying tax at the marginal corporate rate, which is usually much greater than this individual's rate. Meanwhile, the wealthy stockholder gets a modest break because the highest marginal individual rate is greater than the highest marginal corporate rate.

Second, the proposal to adjust basis for retained earnings is unnecessary and unwise. The objective should be efficient capital allocation. If a company is not returning an acceptable return on equity, it should not be retaining earnings. If, on the other hand, its return on equity is greater than the risk-adjusted alternatives, we should not subsidize retained earnings, as economically rational investors will want to keep profits in the company anyway.

The devil, of course, is in the details and I have lengthy analyses of all of them (I'm one of the unemployed. I've got nothing better to do.) . I have, for example, methods for calculating what the risk-adjusted return on equity threshold should be, how much free cash flow should be paid as dividends (most companies cannot pay all of it without impairing liquidity), proposals for addressing the "tax exempt recipient" problem, etc. And, since my background is neither finance nor economics, I've gotten confirmation of the basic validity of my views from Bob Willens, the senior economist and tax specialist at Lehman Brothers. If you suffer from insomnia, you can either go to my web site (<http://scott-juris.blogspot.com>) or drop me a note and get all the stuff.

Lower taxes and greater investment will help this economy expand. More jobs mean more taxpayers – and higher revenues to our government. The best way to address the deficit and move toward a balanced budget is to encourage economic growth—and to show some spending discipline in Washington, D.C. [*Ronald Reagan managed to crusade against spending*

while presiding over the largest peacetime deficits in American history. The Bush Administration can do little about the deficits for the time being; therefore, it wisely positions itself as fighting against undisciplined spending while it fights other enemies too.] [I would argue that the Reagan deficits were largely the fault of Democrats in Congress who did not live up to their commitment to restrain government spending. (Note that I said "largely", not "entirely").] We must work together to fund only our most important priorities. I will send you a budget that increases discretionary spending by four percent next year—about as much as the average family's income is expected to grow. And that is a good benchmark for us: Federal spending should not rise any faster than the paychecks of American families. [There's a risk in mentioning this benchmark, since the government is not likely to meet it—considering the war costs, tax cuts, and other increases in spending the President has in mind. But the risk may seem worthwhile, since Republicans can later claim that the problem would have been even worse if various Democrat spending programs had been passed.]

A growing economy, and a focus on essential priorities, will also be crucial to the future of Social Security. As we continue to work together to keep Social Security sound and reliable, we must offer younger workers a chance to invest in retirement accounts that they will control and they will own. *[Details here will be interesting, especially considering the current level of trust in the stock market.]*

[The change in dividend policy might make privatization more realistic.]
Our second goal is high quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

The American system of medicine is a model of skill and innovation—with a pace of discovery that is adding good years to our lives. Yet for many people, medical care costs too much—and a many have no coverage at all. Those problems will not be solved with a nationalized health care system that dictates coverage and rations care. *[Ah, is this an interesting sentence! First, notice the "nationalized system that dictates coverage" sequence, versus "nationalized system, which dictates..." No one could be in favor of a system that dictates coverage. But might they be in favor of other kinds of nationalized systems? Yes indeed, which brings us to point two: a few lines later, the President is praising Medicare as the bedrock of a future system. We're against nationalized coverage, but for Medicare. (Note in case it's necessary: Medicare IS government-run, nationalized coverage.) What a great country.] [I'm getting tired. My day started at 5 this morning. So, I will refrain from sharing my views on health care policy. I wrote Shannon Brownlee that the answer is elimination of the loophole that excludes employer-provided health benefits from taxable income. After receiving her response, I now think that the pending proposal to simply require every worker to obtain coverage as a condition of employability is a better idea. Shannon and I exchanged extensive correspondence. Ask her for it if you are interested. As for Medicare, I reiterate my lament about candor. Why can't Bush simply say that Medicare is probably a bad idea, but it is a commitment we have made to our seniors that we fully intend to meet?]*

Instead, we must work toward a system in which all Americans have a good insurance policy ... choose their own doctors ... and seniors and low-income Americans receive the help they need. Instead of bureaucrats, and trial lawyers, and HMOs, we must put doctors, and nurses, and patients back in charge of American medicine.

Health care reform must begin with Medicare, because Medicare is the binding commitment of a caring society. *[See previous paragraph.]* We must renew that commitment by giving seniors access to the preventive medicine and new drugs that are transforming health care in America.

Seniors happy with the current Medicare system should be able to keep their coverage just the way it is. And just like you, the members of Congress, members of your staffs, and other federal employees, all seniors should have the choice of a health care plan that provides prescription drugs. My budget will commit an additional 400 billion dollars over the next decade to reform and strengthen Medicare. Leaders of both political parties have talked for years about strengthening Medicare—I urge the members of this new Congress to act this year. *[Good political positioning: on the right side of the "prescription drug" issue, without excessively going into the details.]*

To improve our health care system, we must address one of the prime causes of higher costs—the constant threat that physicians and hospitals will be unfairly sued. *[Another lesson in skillful definition. Are medical costs a problem? The real sources of the problem must be trial lawyers. The networks cruelly cut to a shot of Sen. John Edwards, trial lawyer extraordinaire, for his stony reaction to this line.]* **[I am a lawyer. Law practice is generally an honorable profession. But, the trial lawyers are parasites. I do not necessarily think that medical malpractice litigation contributes materially to our health care problem nationally, although it is a problem in some states. But, the trial lawyers are imposing huge costs on our society as a whole with very little corresponding benefit. Their clients, often poor, usually get little or nothing while the lawyers collect embarrassing fortunes. If trial lawyer conduct and compensation got half the attention given to CEO conduct and compensation, it would be a national scandal.]** Because of excessive litigation, everybody pays more for health care—and many parts of America are losing fine doctors. **[If true, this is a state problem that, frankly, is none of Bush's concern. If states want to have stupid rules that drive doctors out, so be it.]** No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit—and I urge the Congress to pass medical liability reform.

Our third goal is to promote energy independence for our country, while dramatically improving the environment.

I have sent you a comprehensive energy plan to promote energy efficiency and conservation, to develop cleaner technology, and to produce more energy at home. I have sent you Clear Skies legislation that mandates a 70 percent cut in air pollution from power plants over the next 15 years. I have

sent you a [Healthy Forests Initiative](#), to help prevent the catastrophic fires that devastate communities, kill wildlife, and burn away millions of acres of treasured forest. *[Look for the Sierra Club announcement soon, pointing out that this step to prevent the loss of treasured forest actually means increasing logging of those same treasured woods. Yet another impressive demonstration of rule one in political discourse: define things in your own terms. Most successful application of this rule: even Democrats have started saying "death tax" rather than "estate tax."]*

I urge you to pass these measures, for the good of both our environment and our economy. Even more, I ask you to take a crucial step, and protect our environment in ways that generations before us could not have imagined. In this century, the greatest environmental progress will come about, not through endless lawsuits or command and control regulations, but through technology and innovation. Tonight I am proposing 1.2 billion dollars in research funding so that American can lead the world in developing clean, hydrogen-powered automobiles. *[Were there no prospect of war to preoccupy the audience, this would count as a genuine "big idea" in the speech.]* **[Why isn't this attacked as corporate welfare, which is what it is?]**

A simple chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen generates energy, which can be used to power a car—producing only water, not exhaust fumes. With a new national commitment, our scientists and engineers will overcome obstacles to taking these cars from laboratory to showroom—so that the first car driven by a child born today could be powered by hydrogen, and pollution free. Join me in this important innovation—to make our air significantly cleaner, and our country much less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our fourth goal is to apply the compassion of America to the deepest problems of America. For so many in our country—the homeless, the fatherless, the addicted—the need is great. Yet there is power—wonder-working power—in the goodness, and idealism, and faith of the American people. *[Two things going on here: emphasis on compassion theme in general, and religious-spiritual language in particular, which will ring a special bell among born-again Christians like the President himself.]*

Americans are doing the work of compassion every day—visiting prisoners, providing shelter to battered women, bringing companionship to lonely seniors. These good works deserve our praise ... they deserve our personal support ... and, when appropriate, they deserve the assistance of our government. I urge you to pass both my [faith-based initiative](#) and the Citizen Service Act—to encourage acts of compassion that can transform America, one heart and one soul at a time. *[Ditto. Mild risk here of repeating "thousand points of light" theme from Bush I.]*

Last year, I called on my fellow citizens to participate in [USA Freedom Corps](#), which is enlisting tens of thousands of new volunteers across America. Tonight I ask Congress and the American people to focus the spirit of service

and the resources of government on the needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens—boys and girls trying to grow up without guidance and attention ... and children who have to go through a prison gate to be hugged by their mom or dad. I propose a 450 million dollar initiative to bring mentors to more than a million disadvantaged junior high students and children of prisoners. Government will support the training and recruiting of mentors, yet it is the men and women of America who will fill the need. One mentor, one person, can change a life forever—and I urge you to be that one person. *[Convincing and personal. Possible missed opportunity? In his best speech ever, the September 20, 2001 address to a Joint Session of Congress, the President said he would be calling the nation to service and sacrifice. Opportunity to lay out more details of that call?]*

Another cause of hopelessness is addiction to drugs. Addiction crowds out friendship, ambition, moral conviction, and reduces all the richness of life to a single destructive desire. As a government, we are fighting illegal drugs by cutting off supplies, and reducing demand through anti-drug education programs. Yet for those already addicted, the fight against drugs is a fight for their own lives.

Too many Americans in search of treatment cannot get it. So tonight I propose a new 600 million dollar program to help an additional 300,000 Americans receive treatment over the next three years.

Our Nation is blessed with recovery programs that do amazing work. One of them is found at the Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A man in the program said, "God does miracles in people's lives, and you never think it could be you." *[Change for the better: in most SOTU addresses of the last twenty years, this kind of reference would mean a "Lenny Skutnik" moment. Skutnik was the ordinary-citizen hero who rescued victims of an airplane crash from amid ice floes on the Potomac. Ronald Reagan singled him out for praise in a SOTU address, starting a pattern. This time Bush packed the seats around his wife with similar citizen-heroes, but he didn't name them or wave to them. Net increase in dignity.]* Tonight, let us bring to all Americans who struggle with drug addiction this message of hope: The miracle of recovery is possible, and it could be you.

By caring for children who need mentors, and for addicted men and women who need treatment, we are building a more welcoming society—a culture that values every life. And in this work we must not overlook the weakest among us. I ask you to protect infants at the very hour of birth, and end the practice of partial-birth abortion. And, because no human life should be started or ended as the subject of an experiment, I ask you to set a high standard for humanity and pass a law against all human cloning. *[Reinforcement for the political base, comparable to a Democratic President's emphasis on civil-rights laws. By the way, total absence of discussion of race an intriguing aspect of the speech. Perhaps it was simply crowded out; more likely, no brilliant ideas about how to finesse the issue.]*

The qualities of courage and compassion that we strive for in America also determine our conduct abroad. [*Matte mashita!* (See [January/February issue of The Atlantic.](#)) *This is the requisite transition line, saying "We're about to talk about something entirely different, but it's connected in the following way." This is a smoother segue than most, which are variants on the "We must be strong at home as we are strong around the world" theme. But from here on we discuss the outside world, first in a humanitarian way, then with the prospect of war.*] The American flag stands for more than our power and our interests. Our Founders dedicated this country to the cause of human dignity—the rights of every person and the possibilities of every life. This conviction leads us into the world to help the afflicted, and defend the peace, and confound the designs of evil men. [*One of several subtle reminders of the battle the President has undertaken. He doesn't need to return to "axis of evil," with all its complications, but he can remind us that there is an unending struggle between dark and light.*] In Afghanistan we helped liberate an oppressed people. ... and we will continue helping them secure their country, rebuild their society, and educate all their children—boys and girls. [*"Boys and girls" is a nice touch for reminding the public of the anti-female tyranny of the Taliban. Risk here is emphasizing a situation that may prove increasingly problematic: exactly how the post-war era is going in Afghanistan.*] In the Middle East, we will continue to seek peace between a secure Israel and a democratic Palestine. [*A "checklist" sentence. If there had been no mention of the Middle East in the SOTU address, that would be news in itself.*] Across the earth, America is feeding the hungry; more than 60 percent of international food aid comes as a gift from the people of the United States.

As our Nation moves troops and builds alliances to make our world safer, we must remember our calling, as a blessed country, to make this world better. Today, on the continent of Africa, nearly 30 million people have the AIDS virus—including three million children under the age of 15. There are whole countries in Africa where more than one-third of the adult population carries the infection. More than four million require immediate drug treatment. Yet across that continent, only 50,000 AIDS victims—only 50,000—are receiving the medicine they need.

Because the AIDS diagnosis is considered a death sentence, many do not seek treatment. Almost all who do are turned away. A doctor in rural South Africa describes his frustration. He says, "We have no medicines ... many hospitals tell [people], 'You've got AIDS. We can't help you. Go home and die.'"

In an age of miraculous medicines, no person should have to hear those words. [*The one genuine surprise in the speech. As with fuel-cell cars, this would qualify as actual news, and an ambitious idea, if the speech were not dominated by Iraq implications.*] AIDS can be prevented. Anti-retroviral drugs can extend life for many years. And the cost of those drugs has

dropped from 12,000 dollars a year to under 300 dollars a year—which places a tremendous possibility within our grasp.

Ladies and gentlemen, seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many. We have confronted, and will continue to confront, HIV/AIDS in our own country. And to meet a severe and urgent crisis abroad, tonight I propose the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—a work of mercy beyond all current international efforts to help the people of Africa. This comprehensive plan will prevent seven million new AIDS infections ... treat at least two million people with life-extending drugs ... and provide humane care for millions of people suffering from AIDS, and for children orphaned by AIDS. I ask the Congress to commit 15 billion dollars over the next five years, including nearly ten billion dollars in new money, to turn the tide against AIDS in the most afflicted nations of Africa and the Caribbean. *[Outmaneuvering the Democrats: it will be hard for them to oppose this measure, even though they have no idea where the money will come from.]*

This Nation can lead the world in sparing innocent people from a plague of nature. And this nation is leading the world in confronting and defeating the man-made evil of international terrorism. *["Segue" sentence, part two: from the "soft" side of international policy to the hard side.]*

There are days when the American people do not hear news about the war on terror. There is never a day when I do not learn of another threat, or receive reports of operations in progress, or give an order in this global war against a scattered network of killers. *[Effective in conveying the message: more is going on than you think.]* The war goes on, and we are winning. *[And it's going better than you think.]*

To date we have arrested, or otherwise dealt with, many key commanders of al Qaeda. They include a man who directed logistics and funding for the September 11th attacks ... the chief of al Qaeda operations in the Persian Gulf who planned the bombings of our embassies in East Africa and the USS Cole ... an al Qaeda operations chief from Southeast Asia ... a former director of al Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan ... a key al Qaeda operative in Europe ... and a major al Qaeda leader in Yemen. All told, more than 3,000 suspected terrorists have been arrested in many countries. And many others have met a different fate. Let's put it this way, they are no longer a problem for the United States, and our friends and allies *[Beginning and end of the paragraph have an admirably understated tough-guy quality.]* **[I think the underlined sentence is inappropriate for a President of the United States. We need to fight a war, and there will be casualties on both sides. Such is life. But, we should not take pride in killing enemy soldiers. This comment may be appropriate among a bunch of guys in a bar after a few beers, but I was disappointed to hear such a thing from the President in a formal address.]**

We are working closely with other nations to prevent further attacks. America and coalition countries have uncovered and stopped terrorist conspiracies

targeting the American embassy in Yemen ... the American embassy in Singapore ... a Saudi military base ... and ships in the straits of Hormuz, and the straits of Gibraltar. We have broken al Qaeda cells in Hamburg, and Milan, and Madrid, and London, and Paris—as well as Buffalo, New York.

We have the terrorists on the run, and we are keeping them on the run. One by one, the terrorists are learning the meaning of American justice. *[This sentence may be a mistake. All the foreigners who are complaining about Guantanamo, detention without trial, and so on can say: Yes, indeed, they are learning the meaning of your American justice!"]*

As we fight this war, we will remember where it began—here, in our own country. This government is taking unprecedented measures to protect our people and defend our homeland. We have intensified security at the borders and ports of entry ... posted more than 50,000 newly trained federal screeners in airports ... begun inoculating troops and first responders against smallpox ... and are deploying the Nation's first early warning network of sensors to detect biological attacks. And this year, for the first time, we are beginning to field a defense to protect this Nation against ballistic missiles.

I thank the Congress for supporting these measures. I ask you tonight to add to our future security with a major research and production effort to guard our people against bio-terrorism, called Project Bioshield. *[This name won't last. Too much like Marvel Comics.]* The budget I send you will propose almost six billion dollars to quickly make available effective vaccines and treatments against agents like anthrax, botulinum toxin, Ebola, and plague. We must assume that our enemies would use these diseases as weapons, and we must act before the dangers are upon us. *[All of this is, of course, disinformation designed to convince our enemies that we fear these threats when, in fact, there are much more serious threats. Since I am in a position to know what some of those threats are, I find the attempts at misdirection intriguing. (And, no, I will not tell you or anyone else about the real threats I am aware of, because I think any discussion of such matters is irresponsible. They are readily discoverable by anyone who cares to do the research, but I'm not going to help. Those in government who need to know already know.)]*

Since September 11th, our intelligence and law enforcement agencies have worked more closely than ever to track and disrupt the terrorists. The FBI is improving its ability to analyze intelligence, and transforming itself to meet new threats. And tonight, I am instructing the leaders of the FBI, Central Intelligence, Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense to develop a Terrorist Threat Integration Center, to merge and analyze all threat information in a single location. Our government must have the very best information possible, and we will use it to make sure the right people are in the right places to protect our citizens.

Our war against terror is a contest of will, in which perseverance is power. In

the ruins of two towers, at the western wall of the Pentagon, on a field in Pennsylvania, this Nation made a pledge, and we renew that pledge tonight: *[One of the few self-consciously "rhetorical" parts of the speech—and also an illustration of a hoary but still effective rhetorical principle: three elements is the right number of items in a series. "Duty, honor, country," "bell, book, and candle," "of the people, by the people, for the people." The three in this sequence, of course, are the three scenes of attack: the "ruins of two towers," the wall of the Pentagon, the field in Pennsylvania.]* Whatever the duration of this struggle, and whatever the difficulties, we will not permit the triumph of violence in the affairs of men—free people will set the course of history.

Today, the gravest danger in the war on terror ... the gravest danger facing America and the world ... is outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. *[Segue part three: from terrorism in general to the war against Iraq.]* These regimes could use such weapons for blackmail, terror, and mass murder. They could also give or sell those weapons to their terrorist allies, who would use them without the least hesitation.

This threat is new; America's duty is familiar. Throughout the 20th century, small groups of men seized control of great nations ... built armies and arsenals ... and set out to dominate the weak and intimidate the world. In each case, their ambitions of cruelty and murder had no limit. In each case, the ambitions of Hitlerism, militarism, and communism *[Another series of three, and an entry in the battle of metaphors. The more that Iraq can be likened to Nazi Germany, and Saddam Hussein to Hitler, the stronger the case for attacking now rather than waiting and giving the evil power a chance to grow.]* were defeated by the will of free peoples, by the strength of great alliances, and by the might of the United States of America. *[And another. It's up to you, the reader, to notice the subsequent ones.]* Now, in this century, the ideology of power and domination has appeared again, and seeks to gain the ultimate weapons of terror. Once again, this Nation and our friends are all that stand between a world at peace, and a world of chaos and constant alarm. Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people, and the hopes of all mankind. *[The part of the speech trying hardest to sound the Kennedy-inaugural-address note: we do not seek conflict, but we will accept history's burden.]* and we accept this responsibility.

America is making a broad and determined effort to confront these dangers. We have called on the United Nations to fulfill its charter, and stand by its demand that Iraq disarm. We are strongly supporting the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) in its mission to track and control nuclear materials around the world. We are working with other governments to secure nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union, and to strengthen global treaties banning the production and shipment of missile technologies and weapons of mass destruction.

In all of these efforts, however, America's purpose is more than to follow a process—*[subtle dig at the United Nations, plus the French and Russians; they are about rules and etiquette, we are about getting the job done.]* it is to achieve a result: the end of terrible threats to the civilized world. All free nations have a stake in preventing sudden and catastrophic attack. We are asking them to join us, and many are doing so. **[Is this true?]** Yet the course of this Nation does not depend on the decisions of others. Whatever action is required, whenever action is necessary, I will defend the freedom and security of the American people. *[Subtle and important shift through the course of this paragraph. It begins with a declaration of America's responsibility as the main world power; it ends with the President's own assertion of what "I" will do.]*

Different threats require different strategies. *[This paragraph and the next to answer the question: what happened to the other parts of the 'axis of evil?']* In Iran, we continue to see a government that represses its people, pursues weapons of mass destruction, and supports terror. We also see Iranian citizens risking intimidation and death as they speak out for liberty, human rights, and democracy. Iranians, like all people, have a right to choose their own government, and determine their own destiny—and the United States supports their aspirations to live in freedom. **[Discussing Iran was a mistake. Once the regime in Iraq falls, Iran will have a natural incentive to moderate. To some extent, I think we are already seeing a moderating trend in Iran. This kind of rhetoric will only impede the process. The President must remember that he is not just speaking to the people of the United States, but to all governments in the world.]**

On the Korean peninsula, an oppressive regime rules a people living in fear and starvation. Throughout the 1990s, the United States relied on a negotiated framework to keep North Korea from gaining nuclear weapons. We now know that the regime was deceiving the world, and developing those weapons all along. And today the North Korean regime is using its nuclear program to incite fear and seek concessions. America and the world will not be blackmailed. America is working with the countries of the region—South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia—to find a peaceful solution, and to show the North Korean government that nuclear weapons will bring only isolation, economic stagnation, and continued hardship. The North Korean regime will find respect in the world, and revival for its people, only when it turns away from its nuclear ambitions. **[See my comments on Iran. To some extent, I believe North Korea's conduct is the result of an irrational fear that the US threatens its sovereignty. The President could have simply said that North Korea has unwarranted national security concerns as well a very serious economic crises that have caused it to pursue nuclear weapons in violation of agreements that it made. But, although it continues to threaten the peace of the South (which is why we have significant defense assets in place there) North Korea does not have territorial ambitions nor a realistic capability of prevailing in any war with its neighbors. Its nuclear weapons could be destabilizing if exported to other countries of the world, so we will work with**

yadda, yadda, yadda. Bush passed up an opportunity to tell the North Koreans that their national security concerns are unwarranted and that we are not a threat to their sovereignty.]

Our Nation and the world must learn the lessons of the Korean peninsula, and not allow an even greater threat to rise up in Iraq. *[Answer to the question: why are we getting ready to invade Iraq, when North Korea is the one with the nukes?]* A brutal dictator, with a history of reckless aggression ... with ties to terrorism ... with great potential wealth ... will not be permitted to dominate a vital region and threaten the United States.

Twelve years ago, Saddam Hussein faced the prospect of being the last casualty in a war he had started and lost. To spare himself, he agreed to disarm of all weapons of mass destruction. For the next 12 years, he systematically violated that agreement. He pursued chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons even while inspectors were in his country. Nothing to date has restrained him from his pursuit of these weapons—not economic sanctions, not isolation from the civilized world, not even cruise missile strikes on his military facilities. Almost three months ago, the United Nations Security Council gave Saddam Hussein his final chance to disarm. He has shown instead his utter contempt for the United Nations, and for the opinion of the world.

The 108 UN weapons inspectors were not sent to conduct a *scavenger hunt* *[good vivid phrase]* for hidden materials across a country the size of California. The job of the inspectors is to verify that Iraq's regime is disarming. It is up to Iraq to show exactly where it is hiding its banned weapons ... lay those weapons out for the world to see ... and destroy them as directed. Nothing like this has happened.

The United Nations concluded in 1999 that Saddam Hussein had biological weapons materials sufficient to produce over 25,000 liters of anthrax—enough doses to kill several million people. He has not accounted for that material. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed it. *[These last two sentences don't have tremendous rhetorical ring, but their repetition through the next few paragraphs is meant to be incantatory, and to have the mounting sense of a bill of indictment.]*

The United Nations concluded that Saddam Hussein had materials sufficient to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin—enough to subject millions of people to death by respiratory failure. He has not accounted for that material. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed it.

Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard, and VX nerve agent. In such quantities, these chemical agents also could kill untold thousands. He has not accounted for these materials. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed them.

U.S. intelligence indicates that Saddam Hussein had upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents. Inspectors recently turned up 16 of them, despite Iraq's recent declaration denying their existence. Saddam Hussein has not accounted for the remaining 29,984 of these prohibited munitions. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed them.

From three Iraqi defectors we know that Iraq, in the late 1990s, had several mobile biological weapons labs. These are designed to produce germ warfare agents, and can be moved from place to place to evade inspectors. Saddam Hussein has not disclosed these facilities. He has given no evidence that he has destroyed them.

The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed in the 1990s that Saddam Hussein had an advanced nuclear weapons development program, had a design for a nuclear weapon, and was working on five different methods of enriching uranium for a bomb. The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production. Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide.

The dictator of Iraq is not disarming. To the contrary, he is deceiving. From intelligence sources, we know, for instance, that thousands of Iraqi security personnel are at work hiding documents and materials from the UN inspectors—sanitizing inspection sites, and monitoring the inspectors themselves. Iraqi officials accompany the inspectors in order to intimidate witnesses. Iraq is blocking U-2 surveillance flights requested by the United Nations [More disinformation. Although the details are classified, the United States reportedly has a spy plane that replaced the SR-71 that uses ramjet technology to fly at more than 100,000 feet at Mach 6. We do not need Iraq's permission for flights by this plane as there is no way Iraq (or anybody else) could shoot it down. I'm surprised that we think that we can convince Iraq that we are relying on surveillance technology that is 50 years old.]. Iraqi intelligence officers are posing as the scientists inspectors are supposed to interview. Real scientists have been coached by Iraqi officials on what to say. And intelligence sources indicate that Saddam Hussein has ordered that scientists who cooperate with UN inspectors in disarming Iraq will be killed, along with their families.

Year after year, Saddam Hussein has gone to elaborate lengths, spent enormous sums, taken great risks, to build and keep weapons of mass destruction—but why? The only possible explanation, the only possible use he could have for those weapons, is to dominate, intimidate, or attack. With nuclear arms or a full arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, Saddam Hussein could resume his ambitions of conquest in the Middle East, and create deadly havoc in the region. And this Congress and the American

people must recognize another threat. Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody, reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda. *[If there are more specifics here, this is the big news of the speech. If there are not dramatic specifics, comparable to Adlai Stevenson's photos of the Soviet missile sites in Cuba in 1962, this could be a rhetorical mistake. The more the Administration rests its case on a provable connection between Iraq and al Qaeda, the more it's under pressure to produce the "smoking gun." The real case against Iraq, as Administration officials have made clear in interviews, is that whether or not Saddam Hussein was involved in the September 11 attacks, sooner or later he will develop powerful weapons and give them to terrorists—as the next sentence of the speech says. In making the case, the Administration would be on stronger ground if it stressed this future threat.]* Secretly, and without fingerprints, he could provide one of his hidden weapons to terrorists, or help them develop their own.

Before September 11, 2001, many in the world believed that Saddam Hussein could be contained. *[And after September 11, many people believe the same as well. Impressive rhetorical assertion of a connection between America's trauma of that day and the future prospective threat from Iraq.]* But chemical agents and lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons, and other plans—this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take just one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that day never comes.

Some have said we must not act until the threat is imminent. Since when have terrorists and tyrants announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they strike? If this threat is permitted to fully and suddenly emerge, all actions, all words, and all recriminations would come too late. Trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy, and it is not an option.

This dictator, who is assembling the world's most dangerous weapons, has already used them on whole villages—leaving thousands of his own citizens dead, blind, or disfigured. *[This demonstrates Saddam Hussein's evil behavior but does not necessarily dictate U.S. strategy. The gassing occurred during the Iran-Iraq war, when the United States, under Ronald Reagan, was on Iraq's side.]* Iraqi refugees tell us how forced confessions are obtained—by torturing children while their parents are made to watch. International human rights groups have catalogued other methods used in the torture chambers of Iraq: electric shock, burning with hot irons, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues, and rape.

If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning. *[Good strong line.]* And tonight I have a message for the brave and oppressed people of Iraq: Your enemy is not surrounding your country—your enemy is ruling your country. *[Best line]*

of the speech.] [Maybe, but see below re over-personalizing the dispute. This is a great line for Radio America broadcasts to Iraq, but perhaps not so good for Americans who will see the bodies of the oppressed victims on the TV news.] And the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation

[It is a mistake to over-personalize our dispute with Iraq as a dispute with Saddam Hussein. While I am sure that many Iraqi citizens are suffering under his regime, and while he was not democratically elected in any formal sense, he must have a significant level of support among his citizens or he would be overthrown. War with Iraq will involve "collateral damage" and civilian casualties. Portraying all Iraqis as oppressed victims will come back to haunt the Administration.]

The world has waited 12 years for Iraq to disarm. America will not accept a serious and mounting threat to our country, our friends, and our allies. The United States will ask the UN Security Council to convene on February 5th to consider the facts of Iraq's ongoing defiance of the world. Secretary of State Powell will present information and intelligence about Iraq's illegal weapons programs; its attempts to hide those weapons from inspectors; and its links to terrorist groups. *[Benefit for the Administration from this announcement: keeps the clock moving toward action. Drawback: suggests that Powell will have "smoking gun" evidence, which seems unlikely. If truly startling facts were at hand, the President would have used them here.]* We will consult, but let there be no misunderstanding: I Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people, and for the peace of the world, will lead a coalition to disarm him. *[Artful once again: asserts America's intention to act in ways the administration feels it must, but suggests it will still be part of an international effort.]*

Tonight I also have a message for the men and women who will keep the peace, members of the American Armed Forces: Many of you are assembling in and near the Middle East, and some crucial hours may lie ahead. In those hours, the success of our cause will depend on you. Your training has prepared you. Your honor will guide you. You believe in America, and America believes in you. *[Every speechwriter knows the "guaranteed applause" line. This is one of them, and it got the longest ovation of the speech.]*

Sending Americans into battle is the most profound decision a president can make. The technologies of war have changed. The risks and suffering of war have not. For the brave Americans who bear the risk, no victory is free from sorrow. This Nation fights reluctantly, because we know the cost, and we dread the days of mourning that always come. *[Good line, suitable to the president's sober demeanor in this second half of the speech.]*

We seek peace. We strive for peace. And sometimes peace must be defended. A future lived at the mercy of terrible threats is no peace at all. If

war is forced upon us, *[Brilliant "redefinition" phrase: we are not launching a "preemptive" attack, we are being forced against our will to war.]* we will fight in a just cause and by just means—sparing, in every way we can, the innocent. And if war is forced upon us, we will fight with the full force and might of the United States military—and we will prevail. And as we and our coalition partners are doing in Afghanistan, we will bring to the Iraqi people food, and medicines, and supplies...and freedom.

Many challenges, abroad and at home, have arrived in a single season. In two years, America has gone from a sense of invulnerability to an awareness of peril ... from bitter division in small matters to calm unity in great causes. And we go forward with confidence, because this call of history has come to the right country.

Americans are a resolute people, who have risen to every test of our time. Adversity has revealed the character of our country, to the world, and to ourselves.

America is a strong Nation, and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and sacrifice for the liberty of strangers. *[Nice line. Suspect it will not be as well received overseas now as in 1946.]*

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity. *[Another brilliant touch. Redefines the impending effort as something other than the spread of American power and American standards. Simultaneously underscores the moral nature of combat, as the President sees it. This would alarm George Kennan and perhaps Dwight Eisenhower, realists above all else. But it is the stance that comes naturally to Bush, so he might as well make the most of it. See the next paragraph too.]*

We Americans have faith in ourselves—but not in ourselves alone. We do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history.

May He guide us now, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. *[Some time in the last twenty years, politicians decided that they had to end every speech with "God bless the United States of America." It has become boilerplate that replaces the effort to find a real closing theme or idea. The natural ending for the speech would have been the word "history," in the paragraph above.]*

Thank you.