

Bush's new angle on the world

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THE BUSH
CHALLENGE

As Ronald Reagan hands over power to George Bush, Europe expects continuity in US foreign policy. The Bush team enters office satisfied with the fundamental direction and accomplishments of the past eight years. Yet, with evolving world events and a pragmatic new foreign policy team, that continuity will be accented with subtle elements of change.

Bush has been a fighter pilot, a congressman, ambassador to the UN, ambassador to China, CIA director and an active vice-president. A man of action and experience, he will be personally engaged in developing foreign policy. He may try to strike a balance between Jimmy Carter's excessive emphasis on detail and Reagan's regal detachment.

Having experienced both war and diplomacy at first hand, he will not be prone to sabre-rattling, but he will undoubtedly be prepared to use force if necessary to carry out his foreign policy. He also recognizes the fundamental role of Congress in US foreign policy and will seek to soothe campaign animosities by trying to develop an early bipartisan consensus.

Bush has assembled a strong team, long on experience and short on ideology. With James Baker at the State Department, John Tower at Defence, and Brent Scowcroft at the National Security Council, the new administration is the heir to Reagan's pragmatic second term and not his more zealous first term. The principal decision-takers are well known to each other and may work out a division of labour which could avoid the territorial battles that have plagued US foreign policy-making for more than a decade.

East-West relations will remain central. Reagan's Soviet policy during the past few years consisted of dramatic summits, heralding an end to the cold war, combined with continued pressure on Moscow to reform.

Bush's approach could be less dramatic and more businesslike. A broad policy review has already been initiated to assess

the enduring nature of Soviet reform. The Bush administration's policies are expected to stress efforts to formalize and lock in those elements of Soviet foreign policy particularly beneficial to the West.

Managing alliance relations in the wake of the INF treaty and in the shadow of the 1992 European single market is a high priority. This year the decision to modernize Nato's nuclear weapons and the continuing burden-sharing debate threaten alliance cohesion. Bush has called for an early Nato summit and has named the veteran diplomatic troubleshooter, Vernon Walters, as ambassador to West Germany. He will next have to consider ways to respond to Gorbachov's UN speech last month announcing troop cuts.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany may soon have to make preliminary decisions about replacing the ageing Lance missile. Most West Germans oppose nuclear modernization, and a false step could cost Kohl the chancellorship in the 1990 elections. Yet without modernization, Nato faces functional unilateral disarmament in short-range missiles. Bush must secure Kohl's support and congressional funding for modernization without making deployment another Nato loyalty test for Bonn.

Nato's seemingly intractable burden-sharing debate also promises to test Bush's ability to manage both the alliance and the US Congress. Higher European defence spending is unlikely since Gorbachov's UN speech. Yet the automatic Gramm-Rudman budget reductions, plus US military base closures at home, are likely to stimulate renewed congressional calls for US troop withdrawals from Europe. With the US commitment to Nato already being questioned in some European circles, the timing could not be worse. Bush may have to consider alternative approaches, such as additional European financing of US base costs, to stem the tide.

Policy changes in arms control are already evident. The Start

(Strategic Arms Reduction) talks may be delayed long enough for the new team to develop a consensus with Congress on mobile missiles, and to review those draft treaty provisions that make the new officials uneasy. Meanwhile, the focus is on chemical weapons and ballistic missile proliferation, as well as conventional force stability.

The recent Paris conference on chemical weapons and Gorbachov's unilateral troop reductions stimulate optimism, but both negotiations could take years to complete. Despite the current delay, Start could still be Bush's first completed arms control agreement.

During the campaign, Bush hesitated to embrace unequivocally Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative vision. Congress ap-



pears firmly committed to constraining SDI research to about \$4 billion a year and limiting testing to that allowed by the general interpretation of the ABM Treaty. Bush's desire for a security consensus with Congress may override pressures for rapid growth of the SDI programme. Early deployment of a small ground-based ABM system consistent with the Treaty now seems likely.

In the Middle East, direct contact between US diplomats and PLO leaders in Tunisia may foreshadow more active US diplomacy. Initiatives since Camp David have proved futile, and the uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories has brought matters to a boil. The present turmoil could ripen negotiating possibilities. If the peace process

is reactivated, it could become a dominant aspect of Bush's foreign policy.

A new policy is needed for Central America. Congress has demonstrated its ability to obstruct aid to the Contras and undercut the principal tenet of the Reagan doctrine. Efforts to combine regional diplomacy with possible economic incentives are needed to encourage Sandinista leaders to adopt more democratic practices. Meanwhile, trouble is brewing in El Salvador as the Duarte era ends and death-squad killings again abound. Congressional support for aid to El Salvador will wane unless negative trends are reversed. As with strategic weapons, a consensus will probably be sought with Congress on Central American policy.

Elsewhere the Reagan doctrine of support for anti-communist fighters has been more successful. Aid will continue for Jonas Savimbi's Unita in Angola and for the Mujahidin in Afghanistan, but possibly in declining amounts as Cuban and Soviet troops, respectively, withdraw from those two countries. Extension of the Reagan doctrine to additional countries is unlikely.

Foreign policy successes in Afghanistan, southern Africa and Cambodia and new arms control prospects have already forced the Reagan administration to shift gears with regard to the UN, which is needed to monitor the fruits of successful diplomacy with various peace-keeping and arms control monitoring operations.

The \$400 million in back dues owed by the US is not, however, contained in President Reagan's recent budget submission. As the Soviets pay their back dues and suggest new UN peace-keeping initiatives, the Bush administration will need to settle the US bill and consider ways to cope with the UN's growing responsibilities. Economic and environmental issues will be elevated. The collapse of the Gatt meeting in Montreal and fears of European protectionism, as 1992 approaches, reaffirm that trade disputes will have increasingly important implications for Nato.

Efforts by Latin America to seek a unified approach to relieving the \$420 billion regional debt burden also require urgent attention and perhaps a revised Baker plan. Finally, the risk of international environmental disasters, which caught Bush's attention during the campaign, indicate that new initiatives may be expected.

The Bush foreign policy team thus faces a full agenda, with continuity as the general pattern, but probably changes in key areas such as arms control, the Middle East and Central America. Many of the changes will be welcomed in Europe, and should help to strengthen the alliance.

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