

David Schanzer: Hello and welcome to Policy 360. I'm David Schanzer sitting in this week for Dean Judith Kelley. I'm a professor here at the Sanford School and I also direct the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security. It's my great pleasure this week to welcome Stephen J Hadley to the program. Steve served as Deputy National Security Advisor and then starting in 2005 as a National Security Advisor to president George W. Bush. He's currently a principal at the consulting firm, RiceHadleyGates, and he recently co-authored a terrific new book, it's called Handoff: The Foreign Policy George W. Bush Passed to Barack Obama. The book is an impressive collection of the memos that were prepared for the transition between the Bush and Obama administrations with commentary from many of the key policymakers that played a part in the Bush administration. The memos are now declassified and are made public in this book for the first time. My Duke colleague, Peter Fever, is one of the co-authors of this important compendium. Steven Hadley is on campus for the Duke program in American Grand Strategy, Ambassador Dave and Kay Phillips Family International lecture series. Steve Hadley, welcome to Policy 360.

Steve Hadley: Thanks. It's a pleasure to be here.

David Schanzer: Let's just dive in. I want to talk a little bit about the book at first and what its genesis was. So why did you compile it and why did you decide to make these transition memos to the Obama administration the cornerstone of a book to present the Bush foreign policy?

Steve Hadley: Well, interesting. The book Handoff was initially of course a set of transition memos written for the Obama administration. There were 40 of them, we got 39 of them declassified, 30 of them are in this book, and they're reprinted in the book exactly as they were given to the Obama administration. So the purpose of their preparation was to try to work with the Obama administration as it was coming into office, and put them in a position to be able to handle their responsibilities from day one. But three or four years ago, it occurred to me as I was thinking back that these were a pretty good record of what the Bush administration had done, and I went down to Texas to the Bush Library, reread them. They seemed pretty good to me. I talked to President Bush and he requested that they be declassified. We then of course, as you mentioned, got the people who either wrote the memos themselves or worked on the issue to write a postscript, bringing them up to date, and then trying to do two things.

One, say looking back, well how did the Bush administration do? What did we get right, what did we get wrong? And then looking back over 20 years, four administrations dealing with the same set of issues, what were the lessons for future presidents in dealing with these issues, whether it's Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, you name it, because these issues are largely still with us. So that was the purpose. It does two things. One, I thought it was important to highlight the transition from Bush to Obama because it was really a case where an outgoing Republican president and an incoming Democratic president decided to work together and have their staffs work together in the interest of the

country so that the incoming team on day one was prepared to deal with their responsibilities. And that bipartisan cooperation is something I think that's important to highlight in the current day of our fractionated politics.

And then the second thing is to try to use the book plus another thing that is a companion to the book. Each of these transition memos had voluminous attachments to them that were presidential statements, speeches, but also records of NSC meetings, conversations between the president and foreign leaders. All of those attachments have also been declassified to the extent they were classified, and they and the original transition memos, the 30 in the book and nine more that have been declassified that aren't in the book, are on a website maintained by the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University. All of those are in an online archive. So if you take the book plus that online archive, it's a rich source of materials on Bush administration foreign policy. And my hope is that journalists, historians and people who are just interested in foreign policy will go there as a starting point and will see what it was that we were trying to do. They can and should and will say whatever they think about those efforts, but at least they will have a record there of what it was we thought we were trying to accomplish.

David Schanzer:

Well, I'm sure it's going to be a rich source for historians and for analysts for quite some time. I've spent some time with the book myself and it's deep and it's rich and it makes you think. But before, I want to talk about many of the issues in the foreign policy, but let's talk a little bit about the importance of a presidential transition. And I was thinking about this when preparing for this interview. You're right about the 2008/2009 transition over to the Obama administration, but this was really the only normal intra-party transition that we've had in almost 30 years. The 2000 transition was delayed by the Florida election dispute, 2016 transition was problematic because the Trump team was really unprepared. They fired their transition director on the first week.

It was a bit chaotic. And then of course in 2020, the incumbent president didn't accept the peaceful transition of power. So this is a standout in some ways of the transitions we've had in recent times. So tell me a little bit about why transitions are important and what was your goal? You've alluded to it already, but maybe a little more depth about what you were hoping to achieve as National Security director.

Steve Hadley:

So my experience with transitions began in the transition from President Ford to President Carter. And my recollection of it is as follows. I was one of only three or four people asked to stay over into the Carter administration. The last day that I was serving the Ford administration, I checked out of my office and all my safes were locked and the safes had all kinds of documents in them that I'd been using over the last three or four years to manage the issues that were in my keeping, and closed the office door. Next morning I came in the first day of the Carter administration, all those documents were gone and all the safes were empty because they were presidential documents and they were headed for the

Gerald Ford Presidential Library. There were only three or four of us who had been asked to stay on. All the rest of the staff was fired.

And my recollection is there were no communications between incoming and outgoing staffs and no memorandum to tell the incoming group what was going on. That did not seem to be a good way to assist the incoming administration to be able quickly to exercise their responsibilities. And transitions are vulnerable times because there is a temptation about both friends and allies to assume that during a transition, America is distracted, which makes our friends nervous and is a potential opportunity for our adversaries. And particularly if you're in the middle of ongoing military operations as we were from the transition from President Bush to President Obama, these are perilous times and there needs to be continuity. And that's really what we tried to do under the direction of both President Bush and President Obama. President Bush said to Josh Bolton, his chief of staff, "I want this to be the best presidential transition in history."

And a lot of what we did has been incorporated in congressional legislation. So it is now required. And while you're right in the shortcomings of the subsequent transitions, I would say that even in the transition from the Trump to Biden administration, there were portions of the Trump administration, particularly the NSC staff under Robert O'Brien, which really tried to do as best as they could under the circumstances to emulate what was done in the Bush to Obama transition. And in an event at the US Institute of Peace, the current National Security advisor, Jake Sullivan, thanked Robert O'Brien for the transition that he accomplished in that transition, which was otherwise a bit rocky, as you say.

David Schanzer: Well, excellent. Let's dive into the topics. I want to start at the beginning of the book, which I assume is a topic that's really near and dear to your heart since you wrote the introduction to the section, which is the Freedom Agenda. You call it the Soul of Bush's foreign Policy. So for those who aren't really familiar, why don't you explain to us what was the freedom agenda and can you explain, why did it take such a central role in the Bush foreign policy?

Steve Hadley: President Bush really believed in the individual and he believed that people were in the best position to make decisions for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren. And it reflected both his domestic policy as, for example, education reform and No Child Left Behind, but it also reflected his foreign policy. He thought that people, if they could be freed from tyranny, from political violence, from terrorism, from the tyrannies of ignorance and hunger, would better make decisions for their own futures. And similarly, he felt that states that were legitimate, that had the support of their people, that were democratic, that offered them freedom, respect for rule of law and human rights, were states that would be both more enduring and more sustainable over time, but also were states that would better provide for their people, would not go to war with their neighbors and would be allies and friends and supporters of the International Order, which emerged after the end of World War II.

So it was central to how he viewed the human spirit and human individuals and how to unleash their potential, but it was also a cornerstone in his view of how to build effective, legitimate, prosperous and secure states that would be cornerstones for a positive international community, an international community by the way, that would be both consistent with American values and consistent with American interests in the world. And he really felt that there wasn't this split between the realists and the idealists between American interests and American values. He felt that promoting American values in the world was very much an American interest because a world based on those values would be one in which Americans would be more safe, more secure, and more prosperous. That was his view, and you saw it in the War on Terror where he felt that the vision of the terrorists had to be answered. And the vision that he offered was one of asking people to cooperate, to build their own communities in their own states on the basis of freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law.

David Schanzer: So critics might say that freedom is really wonderful, but not if it comes at the expense of stability. And in the freedom agenda memo, there's a list of a number of examples where the promise of freedom has really fallen short. I think specifically of Egypt, which were a country that had its first free election ever, but then quickly moved to reinstall a strong man based principally along a lot of public support, that the freedom was essentially what they chose to go in a different direction. And Iraq, certainly looking 20 years back, it's more free, but it has less stability. So what did your memos suggest in terms of how to address this freedom stability trade off?

Steve Hadley: I think it's a very good point, and I think it's one of the things we learned and are wiser about as a nation now. And I would say it's a couple of things about that. One, I think we've found that if you're dealing with a post-conflict situation as in Iraq and Afghanistan, yes people want freedom, but they also want to eat, as Madeline Albright said, people want to vote and eat. So yes, you want governance that's not corrupt, that is based on freedom and that is the legitimate expression of the people. But you also have to have a government that is able to perform and provide services and build an economic setting in which individual lives can prosper. And there needs to be security. And I think what we realized is those three things, governance, economics, and security need to go forward together if you're going to have both a free and prosperous society that is stable over time.

And that's in some sense, I think, one of the reasons why we keep talking about, and in the preface to the book, [inaudible 00:13:48] Rice and I have an article on the balance of power that favors freedom. So Bush wasn't only about values. He understood that if those values are going to succeed in the world, they have to be supported by what we call a balance of power that favor freedom. That is to say, the United States working with friends and allies who are also committed to democracy but would pool their diplomatic, economic and military heft, to provide a context where countries could build a future that was not only

democratic but secure and also with governments that were able to deliver for their people.

David Schanzer: Thank you. Let's turn to 9/11 because responding to 9/11 was really the event that shaped so much of the Bush administration's focus, and the memo spent really a great deal of time talking about the counter-terrorism strategy the administration developed and the institutional reforms that it championed. And I would think looking back 20 years, more than 20 years, that's a record that the administration's probably very proud of. If we had woken up on September 12th, then you would say that we would, to my knowledge, only one direct the orchestrated Al-Qaeda attack inside the United States in the period since 9/11 referring to the Pensacola incident, which was a small scale incident. Most people would've said, "No way, that would be impossible." And so what's happened to Al-Qaeda and the security we've enjoyed, it's not complete but since then, is something that the Bush administration probably looks back with quite a lot of satisfaction. Do you feel that the Obama administration accepted and built on the foundation that you created or did it take a different pathway? Was the counter-terrorism direction one more of continuity between the administrations or change?

Steve Hadley: That's a good question, and you're right. I think it's important to remind readers and listeners that immediately after 9/11, the intelligence community said that this would be the first of a wave of mass casualty attacks on the United States homeland, some of which could involve the use of weapons of mass destruction. And in October of 2000, one month after 9/11 envelopes containing white pie powder that turned out to be anthrax poison started showing up at congressional offices on Capitol Hill and at News Media headquarters in Washington and elsewhere, and we didn't know where it came. So the sense that we were vulnerable, that we were against an enemy that we did not fully understand led to adoption of some very aggressive measures, some of which when they became public, made the American people, I think rightly in many ways, very uncomfortable.

And they were a function of the guidance that the president gave, which was in the wake of 9/11, he said, "I want to do everything within the law that allows us to protect the country." And it had us making some decisions on some measures in terms of interrogations, in terms of detentions, in terms of interception of communications, that when they became public were very controversial. And some of those measures over time were modified. They were modified by the Bush administration as we necked some of them down as we became more confident that we understood Al-Qaeda and could protect the country. They were necked down by judicial decisions by Congress in terms of legislation. And when the Obama administration came in, in some sense, a lot of those measures had been dialed back and they were in a position to embrace a lot of what we've done and in terms of, for example, direct action against terrorists, be even more aggressive than we had been in the Bush administration.

David Schanzer: You're using a euphemism, but you're talking about drone strikes.

Steve Hadley: Drone strikes, exactly right. And I think what's interesting about that is that through that process of internal reviews by the Bush administration, by the Obama administration, court decisions, legislation, national debate, participated in by the news media, we've come to a consensus in this country of what we're going to do and what we're not going to do in order to protect the country from terrorists. One of the good things about it is the combined effort of multiple administrations of Congress working with the executive and the contributions of the American people. The terrorist threat to the homeland of course has dramatically diminished in terms of what it has been, and we haven't had to contemplate those kinds of contingencies again, but I think the process was painful in many ways and scarring in many ways.

And some of the things like the treatment of detainees in [inaudible 00:19:08] were inexcusable and were a stain on the Bush administration and a stain on the country. So there was a lot of cost. But in the end of the day, to answer your question, I think we saw a lot of continuity between the Bush and the Obama administration, and I think you saw a very American messy process by which we've come to a consensus on what is appropriate to do and not do, in order to protect the country against terrorism, and that's a good thing. And as you say, the proof of the pudding is those predictions by the intelligence community after 9/11, did not come true.

David Schanzer: So I appreciate the way you've addressed this and framed this, but I still note that in the commentary and so on, some of the references in those programs were never framed as maybe a mistake. And I'm wondering, you essentially try to justify it in terms of the threat profile and the environment and the lack of information. But is it possible to look back and call at least some of them, some of these things, mistakes? The CIA interrogation program, as you said, caused a great stain on the nation, detention of Guantanamo, almost all the prisoners have been released without incident and the military commissions, we still have been unable to bring the five conspirators relating to 9/11 to trial. Why not just look back on some of those things and say, "Yeah, these were bad decisions that were caused by the stress we were under, but in retrospect, we should have done things, at least with respect to those three things I mentioned, differently"?

Steve Hadley: It's a good question. It's hard to know. Every president since and including George W. Bush has said they wanted to close Guantanamo, even Barack Obama who campaigned against Guantanamo. And yet under the Bush, Obama, Trump and Biden administrations, no one's been able to do it because as you say, there's still 30 bad guys down there that countries do not want to take back, even though they are their citizens and we don't want to let free. So it's one of the dilemmas, it's not a badge of honor for the country. On the other hand, you've had four administrations from two different parties committed to trying to get rid of it and not being able to close it down. The interrogation



program, look, the kinds of things that went on in Abu [inaudible 00:21:50] were unacceptable. As I said, they stained our country and stained our administration.

I think some of the Department of Defense interrogation programs I think also got out of hand and had to be reigned back, and that was also unfortunate. The CIA program, as you know quite well, was very limited to 100, 120 folks. Only 30 plus were ever exposed to those enhanced interrogation techniques. It's controversial. There was a Senate Democratic majority report that says we got no value of it. Mike Hayden, who was CIA Director, not at the time of that program, but subsequent, said that about 50% of which we learned about Al-Qaeda in the aftermath of 9/11 came from that program. I think that's going to be an issue of debate for a long time. And in terms of the military commissions, good idea at the time, and we never got it off the ground. 20 years later, it's still not off the ground. I think that one we'd have to say was an understandable experiment, that at the end of the day, failed.

David Schanzer: Okay. Let's turn to the second predominant issue, of course, which is Iraq, and we've just had the 20th anniversary of the date of the invasion. Most of the materials I've read reflecting on this anniversary have pointed out two major themes that number one, Iraq has a greater terrorism problem now than it did prior to the invasion. And that the key effect of removing the Saddam Hussein regime has been that Iran, our principle enemy in the area, is more powerful and more influential in Iraq than it was due to the invasion. So I'm wondering if these results were the inevitable byproducts of the decision to remove Saddam to have regime change, or if things would've been different if the advice that you provided in your memos had been followed by subsequent administrations?

Steve Hadley: This of course is the hard question, and there's been an enormous amount of commentary. I think, at the risk of giving you an answer that's longer than you want, I think we've forgotten a lot of the history on Iraq, and obviously I was part of those decisions, so I may have a biased view, but there's an infusion for example, that we went into Iraq to spread democracy out of a barrel of a gun. That was not true. We went into Iraq because 17 UN Security council resolution said that Saddam Hussein had pursued weapons of mass destruction, supported terror, terrorized his people, invaded his neighbors, and he had to stop. So it was national security considerations. And remember, the regime change policy for which the Bush administration is favored, was actually adopted by the Congress of the United States under the Clinton Administration in 1998 that made regime change the national policy of the United States.

So it was a removal of a dictator for national security reasons. And then the question was, so what then? Do we replace one dictator with a dictator that is going to be more congenial to our interests? Or do we give the Iraqi people what many Iraqis said they wanted, which was an opportunity to build a more prosperous, stable and democratic future for themselves? And we opted for the latter. Why? One, to help the Iraqis do it. We recognized we could not do it, but

it was their aspiration and we thought we had an obligation to help. One, it was because that's who we are as Americas. We stand for those values and those freedoms, as we've discussed earlier, we think nations based on those freedoms and those values and principles are better global citizens. But also our view was, in the communities that are driven by ethnic, religious and other divisions as Iraq, the only way they would hold together was in a democratic framework.

And our aspiration was to help the Iraqis build a society where Sunnis, Shia and Kurds could work together for a common future, not what all too often was the case in the Middle East where Sunnis either pressed Shia, Shia pressed Sunnis, and both of them tended to beat up on the Kurds. So that was our aspiration. We failed to stabilize the situation in Iraq from 2003 to 2007. We paid an enormous price for that. The Iraqis paid an enormous price for that. And it wasn't until the surge decision in 2007 and 2008 that really we defeated Al-Qaeda in Iraq and brought the level of violence down to the point where it was no longer a threat to the Iraqi government. And that's how really it stayed until 2011 where the Obama administration decided to pull our troops out of Iraq.

They did it pursuant to an understanding reached with the Bush administration and Prime Minister Malachy, that all troops would go out in 2011, but within understanding between the two of us that there would be a case and there would be an effort to try to leave troops to support and assist the Iraqis in handling the security situation after 2011. The Obama administration could not reach an agreement with the Malachy administration. All the troops come out. So Iraq, for the so-called endless war, is over. Then what happens? Syria descends into Civil war. We don't pay attention, I think in the way probably we should have. Al-Qaeda reconstitutes as ISIS in Syria and then goes in and takes 40% of Iraq in 2014. And it is the Obama administration not the Bush administration, that sends our troops back into Iraq in 2014 to help the Iraqis throw out the ISIS elements and reestablish sovereignty over the whole country. Where is Iraq today?

If you think what the Iraqi people have been through, decades of brutal rule by Saddam Hussein, the dislocation of the war in 2003, our failure to stabilize it between 2003 and 2007, the invasion of ISIS, the problems of climate change, the problems of a meddling neighbor in terms of Iran, the problems of volatility and oil prices, the remarkable thing is that the country has still hung together. It has had now seven peaceful elections and peaceful transitions of power. Admittedly, the Iraqis are getting disappointed and disillusioned with their democracy in terms of participation rights in those elections, but it is holding together. And I think that there is still a chance that Iraq will be what we had hoped it would be and what the Iraqis in the immediate aftermath in 2003 hoped it would be, which is a place where Sunni, Shia, Kurds, and other minority groups can work together for a common future in peace with their neighbors, and part of a respected member of the international community. So I haven't given up on Iraq. A lot of suffering, a lot of mistakes along the way, but I think



there's something there for the Iraqis to work with and they're trying to build their future.

David Schanzer: If you wouldn't mind getting into the weeds on one Iraq issue, and I want to talk about the agreement you referenced, which was the 2008 status of forces agreement, which as I understand it, and please correct me if I'm wrong, the Bush administration attempted to negotiate initially without a withdrawal date. The president ultimately disagreed and canceled negotiations and it wasn't really restarted until the Bush administration did agree to have two deadlines, one from the withdrawal of troops from towns and cities, and then the December 30th, 2011 agreement to go with a full troop withdrawal. And then that agreement goes through the Iraqi parliament, it receives a widespread support. Indeed, as I understand it, the only people who voted against it are groups that wanted the US to get out earlier, and is agreed by the Council of States, the three top representatives. And that is an agreement.

And that in a way, in the name of the book, that is the situation that is handed off to the Obama administration. You have an Iraqi political establishment because of that agreement. And you talk about the freedom agenda, its democracy has ratified that we want the troops out by 2011. And there's the, I think, part of the common lore or the story that's often told is that, well, there was always an agreement to have a side deal, there was a side deal or a mutual understanding that we have a negotiation and troops are going to stay after 2011. But it also seems to me that the context created an expectation that we were going to leave, that was going to have to be overcome to reach that side agreement. So Obama is often criticized for leaving too soon, and I think the historical record shows that that's the case. But isn't it also the case that the Bush administration by entering into this agreement, did set a expectation, a very strong expectation, that went through the entire Iraqi society that we were going to leave and it would've been a very extraordinary event to keep American troops there without the Iraqi parliament agreeing to it.

Steve Hadley: It's interesting you should say that, and it's a very fair rendition of the history, but the interesting thing is we in 2014, and I'll go back through that history just for a minute, but in 2014 when we go back with troops, it is not with the approval of the Iraqi party.

David Schanzer: Well, Marty Dempsey who is here, and I've heard him discuss this ... Well listen, that was an extraordinary situation that Iraq was going to disintegrate. I mean, ISIS was on the doorstep of Baghdad at this point. Both parties, the Americans and the Iraqis understood that if we didn't move quickly, whether the parliament was with it or not, we'd have a crisis on her hands. But that's a very different context, that's not necessarily a precedent-

Steve Hadley: Yes and no.

David Schanzer: For what happened in 2011.

Steve Hadley: So let's go back. So Malachy made very clear that the only way he could agree to an agreement to leave us forces after 2008 when the security council umbrella for those authorization expired was if the agreement, the status of forces agreement, as you said, had an end date when Americans would leave at the end of 2011. And so in the end of the day, the president agreed to that. There's no doubt about that. It is also true, as the book lays out, not just a matter of lore, that the understanding we had with the Malachy regime was that when the politics had calmed down in both the United States and Iraq, as we came up on that 2011, we would negotiate a narrow extension of American forces to remain in Iraq to train and support the Iraqi forces. That would be their mission, not a combat mission.

That is what the Obama administration inherited. They tried to come up with an agreement to leave the forces there. And it founded on the principle of whether it needed as a legal matter, approval of the COR, Iraqi parliament. And the decision was that it did, and Malachy thought he could not get it through the parliament. So the troops come out. In 2014, notwithstanding the position of the lawyers that we couldn't deploy troops in Iraq except for an agreement approved by the parliament, we do exactly that in 2014, and the forces then help the Iraqis expel ISIS.

And finally in 2018, those forces then remain, again without a framework of agreement approved by the Iraqi parliament for exactly the mission that they were intended in 2011 if we had been able to leave the forces in the ground after 2011, a narrow mission of support and training of the Iraqi forces. And they are still there today, 2,500 troops. Question people will ask, historians will ask, if we had left the troops there in 2011, even without approval of the COR, the Iraqi parliament, would it have had an impact on Malachy's behavior after the troops left in 2011? Would it have made a difference when ISIS reared it's head and started coming into Iraq in 2014? Don't know.

David Schanzer: Okay. Well that's a very good rebuttal and we'll just leave it there to say, should we have continued to have troops there when if we're there to create partially, we're trying to create a democracy essentially against the will of the Iraqi people as expressed in this parliament. I mean, there is some tension to that concept.

Steve Hadley: Sure. But of course, as you pointed out, once the ISIS come in 2014, the will of the Iraqi people changes.

David Schanzer: Well, let's turn to Russia because this is so important in light of what's happening in our world today with Ukraine. And you very much point out, the memos point out how much continuity there was in the goals with respect to Russia and the Clinton, Bush and Obama administration. And part of it is trying to convince Russia that NATO expansion was not a threat to its interests and so on. But I am wondering, there was a framework agreement enacted during the Bush administration that went beyond state countries that were essentially part

of the Iron Curtain, to territories, Georgia and Ukraine, that were part of the former Soviet Union. And as I understand, that framework agreement was talking about potential future entry into NATO. So could you illuminate us on whether ... Was that maybe a bridge that went even too far for Putin and maybe laid some of the groundwork for the clear anxieties that he has, that possibly has led to the situation we're in now with the war in Ukraine.

Steve Hadley:

This is one that historians are going to have a lot of fun with for a long time. What you're referring to, of course, is the 2008 Bucharest Summit. Let me start back actually. You correctly point out that what the Bush administration tried to do was what the Clinton administration tried to do. We thought that the Russia that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union presented potentially a historic opportunity for Russia to move permanently to the West. It had been struggling with its relationship with the West for 400 years in its history. And this was a moment maybe when that could happen. And Bush would talk to Putin and would say, "Vladimir, you have a historic opportunity to bring Russia permanently into the west." And Putin would say, "Mr. President, that's what I want to do. But there are dark forces in Russia that must not be awakened, and you need to let me do it in my own way and in my own time." But that's what we tried to do to bring Russia into the international system, to bring it into Western institutions, to have a constructive relationship with Russia.

Ultimately, countries make their own decisions and Putin has adopted a different course. Domestically, he's become more and more authoritarian. And of course he was traumatized by the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Turkestan in 2004 to 2006, which we thought were actually an opportunity to build democratic prosperous states that would be good neighbors of Russia, but Putin thought it was an effort led by the CIA to install regimes that would be anti-Russian as a dress rehearsal for destabilizing Russia. And in 2008, he goes into Georgia, 2014 into Ukraine, 2022 into Ukraine again. Bucharest is interesting. In Bucharest, this is in the summer of 2008 in Bucharest, Romania. The issue is whether Georgia and Ukraine should be given a membership action plan, which was the way you got into NATO. We favored it very strongly because we wanted to put those countries safely in NATO so they would be out of bounds for Russian meddling and influence.

And it is interesting that the only two countries that Russia has invaded are Ukraine and Georgia, the two countries that are not in NATO in that part of the world. So we argued very strongly for giving them a membership action plan and a NATO prospect of membership. The French and the Germans strongly opposed, publicly opposed. And there was a divide within NATO and it was papered over by language that said, ultimately the vocation of these countries is to be members of NATO. But the divisions over that question were now very public and virtually, while there were some agreements between NATO and these countries and United States and these NATO countries to try to upgrade their military capabilities, the issue of NATO membership for Georgia and

Ukraine was off the table. And indeed, the Ukrainians even dropped their desire and their request to be part of NATO.

A lot of people say, "Well, the fact that we tried to get them into NATO and the fact that there were declarations that they would be in NATO was a provocation for the Russians." I think you could make the reverse argument that the failure to give them a membership action plan and the demonstration of divisions on that very question could reassure Putin that in fact they weren't going to be members of NATO. So what's the problem? I think this whole issue about missile defense and membership in [inaudible 00:41:24] is the rationale for Putin's move into Ukraine in 2022 is belied by the statement Putin makes on the eve of that invasion. The last half of it, which looks like it's written by the foreign ministry, talks about NATO enlargement, missile defense, failure to take into account legitimate Russian security interests and all the rest.

The front part of the speech, which is vintage Putin, is all about basically his vision for a restored, not Soviet empire, restored Russian Empire, in the area of traditional Russian lands, and the ending of Ukrainian sovereignty and this notion that Ukraine could only be sovereign if it's part of Russia. And it's very clear that his objective is to eliminate Ukraine and to bring it into Russia as part of an expansion of Russian territory in the mode of Peter the Great. So much for NATO enlargement and missile defense being the ... They are the excuse for the invasion, they are not the reason for the invasion.

David Schanzer: So I'd like to conclude exploring a little bit about what many people say is President Bush's most lasting, enduring, and greatest legacy, and that is with respect to his tackling of so many endemic diseases, mostly in Africa and so on. And it's just fascinating that there are hundreds of pages and many memos on this topic, almost more time on that than Russia and China. So it is, clearly in your view, a very important part of the President's legacy. And I don't remember this, but I wonder if in taking office in January 2001, if this was something that was foremost on President Bush's mind or this is something that evolved during his presidency. So I'm wondering if you could tell the story of that part of the Bush Administration's foreign policy and talk a little bit about also how subsequent administrations, whether they followed your advice and have they built on this very important foundation that was built by the president.

Steve Hadley: It's ironic that we're celebrating the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, and is also the 20th anniversary of the PEPFAR program. When we came into office, we started reading in intelligence as to what HIV/AIDS was going to do to the African continent. The infection rates of middle class persons in some countries were well over 50%. And there was a suggestion that the HIV/AIDS was going to wipe out the middle class in a number of these countries, which would not only cause great death and suffering, but would set them back in terms of their economic development for generations. And Mike Gerson, the late Mike Gerson, Condi Rice, brought this to the president and the president says, "At

one point I said to them, well, prove to me that it's going to be like this." And so Condi and Mike came back with all the intelligence and the president said, "You're right."

And he directed Josh Bolton to lead a group to come up with a proposal to deal with the problem of HIV/AIDS in Africa. And Josh and Gary Edson, who was working closely with him, came back with a proposal. We briefed it to the president. The president said, "Not bold enough, go back and do it again." So they came back with another proposal that was for 15 billion dollars over five years, which doesn't sound like much these days, but in those days was real money, and it was a national program to deal with HIV/AIDS through drug treatment and care and prevention, with concrete targets. Bush then did a couple of things that were very important for the future of the program. One, he took a US national program and took it on the road. We had led the establishment of a UN program to deal with HIV/AIDS and Malaria, but he got the G7 involved and ultimately a large group of countries agreed to participate.

Secondly, he insisted that it would not be the program of a single administration, but had to transcend to his successors. And so he took the time to build a bipartisan consensus on the hill to support the program. So it was an agreement and a program supported by the executive branch, by the congressional branch, by both Houses of Congress, by Republicans and Democrats. And that explains the fact that it has been kept ongoing by the succeeding three administrations, which were very different from one another on so many issues, but on this one showed a great deal of continuity. I think one of the secrets about foreign policy generally is many times there's a lot more continuity than you would think if you just listened to our political debates. But this is a case in a program which the American people should be really proud of.

It was one that saved an estimate of 25 million lives in Africa through the generosity of the American people. And unfortunately, the American people know almost nothing about it, and it should be something that they are very proud of. This was a piece of really a comprehensive strategy for Africa that involved settlement of six regional disputes that had killed tens of thousands and had ravaged economies in Africa. It was part of a new approach to developments which treated African countries as partners rather than supplicant. And of course, it was an initiative to deal with HIV/AIDS, but also Malaria and neglected tropical diseases. It is, I think, one of the programs that started in the Bush administration, had international support, had support in subsequent administrations, and of which the American people rightly should be very proud because it was in the end of the day, their support and their money that made it happen.

David Schanzer: Well, Steve Hadley, thank you so much for joining me today. Thank you for your service to our country. I think listeners will feel that there was a very erudite and thoughtful person who was helping shepherd George Bush's foreign policy throughout his entire administration. Thank you as well for this book. I'm going

to get it signed before we finish the interview today. Our guest, of course, is the editor of Hand-off: The Foreign Policy George W. Bush Passed to Barack Obama with co-editors, Peter Feaver, William Inboden, and Meghan O'Sullivan. And you can find out more about this book on our website, [policy360.org](http://policy360.org). Steven is on campus, he's going to be the ambassador of Dave and Kay Philip International lecture series lecturer for 2023. And it's been really a pleasure to spend some time with you on Policy 360. I'm David Schanzer and we'll be back in following weeks with another conversation. Thank you again, Steve.

Steve Hadley: Thank you, David. It's a pleasure to be with you.