Purpose 1

Purpose 2

**Moving into a New Millennium**

**George W. Bush**

As the 2000 presidential election approached, two-term vice president Al Gore won the Democratic nomination and chose Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman as his running mate. During the race, Gore struggled with the awkward situation of campaigning on the economic prosperity of the Clinton administration, while distancing himself from the Clinton scandals.

For the Republicans, the primary race was a heated fight that included Senator John McCain of Arizona and George W. Bush, governor of Texas and son of former President Bush. McCain ran on both a promise to reform campaign finance rules and his strong record of military service—he had been held as a prisoner of war for over five years in North Vietnam. Bush won the nomination and chose as his running mate Dick Cheney, former Secretary of Defense under the elder Bush's administration.

A third-party candidate, Ralph Nader, also entered the presidential race. Running for the Green Party, Nader argued for better environmental policies and hoped to provide voters with an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. Many Democrats worried that Nader's campaign would take votes away from Gore.

A key issue that arose during the race was how to spend the federal budget surplus that was expected to occur as a result of the economic boom at the end of the 1990s. Bush argued that two-thirds of the expected surplus should be used for tax cuts for all income brackets. He also supported decreasing the size of the federal government and privatizing certain social services. Gore argued that the surplus should be used to pay down the national debt and fund Social Security and Medicare programs. He also advocated smaller tax cuts aimed at the lower and middle classes.

When voters went to the polls in November, the outcome was anything but expected. On the night of the election, major television networks made and retracted predictions for the winner as the race in Florida became too close to call. When the votes were finally tallied, Bush's margin of victory was small enough that state law required a recount. The second machine count confirmed a Bush victory by a few hundred votes. Democrats argued that hand counting was needed in several counties because the punch-card voting system was confusing and the machines used in counting did not accurately read many of the ballots. For over a month, the nation awaited election results from Florida, the state where Bush's brother Jeb served as governor.

In some counties, election officials began examining punch-card paper ballots by hand, trying to assess voter intention on cards where the paper chads, or dots, had not been completely punched out. Meanwhile, Republicans argued that the counting should cease because it amounted to changing election guidelines after the fact, and they took their case to the courts. The first court ruling came from the Florida Supreme Court and required officials to hand count as many as 60,000 ballots. The Bush team appealed this decision to the United States Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the Florida legislature took action to name electors that would give the state's 25 electoral votes to Bush so that he would win the state regardless of the results of the popular vote recount. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that the recount was unconstitutional because it violated "equal protection" as defined by the Constitution. As a result, Bush won the electoral vote and the presidency. The combination of the controversy in Florida and Gore's win in the popular election by over a half-million votes caused some voters to view Bush's victory as illegitimate.

The controversy over the 2000 election was silenced on the morning of September 11, 2001. At 8:46 A.M. a hijacked jetliner crashed into the 96th floor of the north tower of New York City's World Trade Center, causing a fireball to engulf the surrounding floors of the building. At 9:03 another jetliner slammed into the 80th floor of the south tower. New York City police, firefighters, and other rescue workers raced to the scene. About an hour after the first plane hit the World Trade Center, a third jetliner slammed into the side of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. At 10:05 the south tower of the World Trade Center began to collapse, sending debris into the streets below. A few minutes later, as part of the Pentagon collapsed, a fourth jetliner crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. Before the crash, passengers aboard the plane communicated via cell phone that they intended to regain control of the plane from the terrorists. In the end, the terrorist attacks killed nearly 3,000 people. A stunned and sorrowful nation united in newfound patriotism and in a struggle against the new reality of terrorism.

In the days following what is now known as "9-11," government officials indicated that the attacks had been carried out by members of the Al Qaeda terrorist organization, headed by Osama bin Laden—an extremist who had been ousted from his native Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda was believed to be responsible for earlier bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and for the bombing in Yemen of the USS Cole, a U.S. destroyer. Bin Laden and his terrorist organization were based in Afghanistan, a country under the oppressive rule of an Islamic fundamentalist group called the Taliban.

The U.S. government supported and aided the Taliban and bin Laden years earlier when they were fighting the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. However, bin Laden and his supporters had now come to hate the United States for a number of reasons, including U.S. support for Israel in the ongoing struggle between Israelis and Palestinians, economic sanctions against Iraq, the strength of the U.S. military and its presence in the Middle East, and a desire to keep Western ideas from influencing the Muslim world. Thus, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon served as symbolic attacks on the economic and military strength of the United States.

On September 20, President Bush addressed the nation and a joint session of congress declaring that the U.S. would engage in a "lengthy campaign" against terrorism. He emphasized respect for the Muslim faith, created the Office of Homeland Security, and appointed Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge as its first leader. He officially began the "war on terror" by ordering the Taliban to turn over Osama bin Laden and members of Al Qaeda or face attack by the U.S. military. The Taliban refused the ultimatum, and Bush began a military campaign against them. Joined by anti-Taliban Afghan forces, American troops overthrew the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and began hunting down members of Al Qaeda hiding in underground hideouts in the rough Afghan terrain. Despite the quick overthrow of the Taliban, U.S. forces remained in Afghanistan to search for bin Laden and Al Qaeda members, while Afghans worked to create a new government.

Afghanistan was not to be the only site of U.S. military action under the Bush administration. In the January 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush declared that North Korea, Iran, and Iraq constituted an "axis of evil" that threatened peace around the world by sponsoring terror and pursuing weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, he pointed out that Iraq had agreed to weapons inspections after the Gulf War but had failed to let the inspectors complete their work. In September, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly and asked them to confront this problem. A month later, Congress approved a resolution allowing President Bush to decide if the U.S. should use force against Iraq.

In November 2002, the U.N. Security Council approved a new set of inspections known as Resolution 1441 to be carried out in Iraq. Days later, Iraq accepted the terms of the resolution. In January 2003, Iraq turned over documentation of its chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs. After examining the documentation, Chief U.N. Weapons Inspector Hans Blix reported that the information was not complete and did not meet the U.N.'s request. During the next few months, Secretary of State Colin Powell urged the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution that would force Iraq to comply with Resolution 1441 or face consequences. Although Britain supported such a resolution, other countries, such as France and Russia, vowed to veto resolutions that would in effect authorize war.

In early 2003, President Bush outlined the chemical, biological, and nuclear threat posed by Iraq in his State of the Union address, and he began to deploy U.S. troops to the Middle East. There were conflicting feelings about the decision to go to war in Iraq, which became apparent when pro- and anti-war protests took place in the U.S. and around the world. In mid-March 2003, while the U.N. continued to try to get Iraq to comply with Resolution 1441, President Bush ordered Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq in 48 hours or face attack by the American military. Days later, without U.N. approval, the U.S. began air strikes in Iraq. A ground invasion by U.S. and British troops followed. In early April the troops overtook the Iraqi capitol of Baghdad.

President Bush announced the end of major combat in Iraq on May 1, 2003. Although major conflict had ended, American and British forces remained in Iraq and were joined by peacekeepers from other countries. Hundreds of soldiers continued to be killed in attacks while the U.S. and the U.N. worked to help Iraq establish democracy. While in Iraq, U.S. troops continued to search for members of Saddam Hussein's regime. In April, U.S. Central Command had released a "most wanted" list of terrorists to all the troops in the form of a deck of playing cards. Over the next year, most of the regime members were captured or killed. Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, died in a gunfight with U.S. troops on July 22, 2003, and Saddam was captured on December 13, 2003.

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