Originally written for French audiences in 1951, Richard Wright seeks to address the question of how Willie McGee could be executed in Mississippi when doing so was clearly considered unjust in the world of democratic opinion. Wright settles the question of McGee’s innocence in a sentence and so turns to the plantation economy of Mississippi in an effort to contextualize the events. The most backward of US states in educational, cultural, and social terms, nothing had transpired economically since the Civil War to relieve whites’ complete domination of blacks, even though blacks vastly outnumbered whites in terms of population. This meant that whites had to hold state power through ongoing racial violence, terror, and repression. Still, after World War II, brutal lawlessness on the part of the United States became an international liability requiring that a move be made from extralegal to legal lynching. While white Mississippians had not anticipated that McGee’s execution would have negative global consequences, their barbarous standing in the eyes of the world was less significant to them than local pressures to defend white power over blacks. This did not mean that international agitation was without effect: it would force white Americans to think hard before staging another legal lynching and about the price of their continued race prejudice.

In Defense of the Bush Doctrine
Robert G. Kaufman
The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, shattered the prevalent optimism in the United States that had blossomed during the tranquil and prosperous 1990s, when democracy seemed triumphant and catastrophic wars were a relic of the past. President George W. Bush responded with a bold and controversial grand strategy for waging a preemptive Global War on Terror, which has ignited passionate debate about the purposes of American power and the nation's proper role in the world. This book offers a vigorous argument for the principles of moral democratic realism that inspired the Bush administration's policy of regime change in Iraq. The Bush Doctrine rests on two main pillars—the inadequacy of deterrence and containment strategies when dealing with terrorists and rogue regimes, and the culture of tyranny in the Middle East, which spawns aggressive secular and religious despotisms. Two key premises shape the book's case for the Bush Doctrine's conformity with moral democratic realism. The first is the fundamental purpose of American foreign policy since its inception: to ensure the integrity and vitality of a free society “founded upon the dignity and worth of the individual.” The second premise is that the cardinal virtue of prudence (the right reason about things to be done) must be the standard for determining the best practicable American grand strategy. This book provides a broader historical context for the post-September 11 American foreign policy that will transform world politics well into the future. The book connects the Bush Doctrine and current issues in American foreign policy, such as how the U.S. should deal with China, to the deeper tradition of American diplomacy. Drawing from positive lessons as well as cautionary tales from the past, the book concludes that moral democratic realism offers the most compelling framework for American grand strategy, as it expands the democratic zone of peace and minimizes the number and gravity of threats the United States faces in the modern world.

Waging the War on Terror
Hal Brands

in From Berlin to Baghdad: America's Search for Purpose in the Post-Cold War World


Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses the war on terror, which unfolded during the early 2000s. This showed that the strategy of the Bush administration was not nearly well integrated as it had originally appeared. At the same time, the war on terror quickly evolved into a political lever, and antiterrorism
remained a powerful rhetorical tool. In the end, the return to coherence brought about by 9/11 had mixed results for the practice and politics of U.S. diplomacy.

Dramatic Circumstances, Dramatic Ambivalence
Jasmine Farrier

in Congressional Ambivalence: The Political Burdens of Constitutional Authority

This chapter examines the seemingly unique post-9/11 political landscape, which also showcases the cycle of ambivalence in a very different and more condensed context. In the early months and years after the attacks, especially seen in the USA Patriot Act and the Iraq War resolution, Congress delegated extraordinary powers not only through the bills' text but also through the unorthodox speed and limited deliberations preceding their passage. Congressional rhetoric in the year after 9/11 echoed the Bush administration's argument that only it saw the nation's interest, while members who advocated the House and the Senate's traditional prerogative to review the administration's requests were branded as obstructionists or worse. Congress had its chances to question the nation's intelligence problems related to 9/11, the Iraq war, and the administration's management of the War on Terror in general during congressional reviews and confirmation hearings, but these did not result in extraordinary changes in policy or major cuts in Bush's spending requests.

The Truth Is Still Out There
Paul A. Cantor

in The Invisible Hand in Popular Culture: Liberty vs. Authority in American Film and TV

Chapter Nine discusses the impact of 9/11 on American popular culture. At the time, media experts predicted that 9/11 would transform film and television forever and lead to a new wave of patriotism. Pundits argued that anti-government shows such as The X-Files had been made irrelevant by 9/11 and would be relegated to obscurity. The chapter
argues for the relevance of The X-Files to 9/11; the series had anticipated the spread of global terrorism, and its spin-off, The Lone Gunmen, had even eerily predicted details of the 9/11 attacks. The chapter examines “The Truth,” the last episode of The X-Files, and treats it as a critique of the emerging War on Terror. It then shows that later films such as The Dark Knight and television series such as 24 did not cease to be critical of government in the wake of 9/11, but instead followed the model of The X-Files.

Looking to the Future

Christopher A. Ford

in China Looks at the West: Identity, Global Ambitions, and the Future of Sino-American Relations

This chapter focuses on the perceived hegemony controlled by the United States and how China incorporated its theory of American decline into this existing theory. In particular, the Chinese Communist Party saw America’s presence in the Middle East and the war on terror as ways to quash China’s rising power. The Party-state did not claim any responsibility for its poor relationship with the United States because China itself was blameless. Despite its covetousness of America’s global role, the regime continually derided America’s choices.

“We’ll Have No Race Trouble Here”

Jason Jordan

in An Unseen Light: Black Struggles for Freedom in Memphis, Tennessee

In the fall of 1940 black Memphians experienced a prolonged campaign of harassment, mass arrests, and violence at the hands of Memphis police known as the “Reign of Terror.” These actions were carried out under the direction of local political boss E. H. Crump as more black Memphians, tiring of Crump’s iron-fisted rule, backed candidates that promised to move away from the “plantation mentality” of Crump’s regime. While systematically suppressing local black political organizing, Crump offered public praise, token benefits, and a respite from legal
action to black community leaders who were willing to rebuke other “agitators” within the black population. As a result, some blacks capitulated to Crump’s demands with the hopes of earning some small amount of favor, while others struggled to resist the might of the Crump machine. This essay argues that this particular moment in Memphis history made concrete a deep intraracial divide within its black activist community, delaying by decades any real chance to change the city’s racial status quo.

Still Disloyal
Berry Craig

in Kentucky Confederates: Secession, Civil War, and the Jackson Purchase

As much as it disappointed Purchase secessionists to see Forrest leave, their discomfiture increased with the return of General E. A. Paine, starting in July. Paine ended up portrayed as the worst villain in Purchase history, the region's Robespierre, whose “reign of terror” allegedly included wholesale murder, though by firing squad, not guillotine. To the Purchase's secessionist majority, Paine was the vilest sort of Yankee, an abolitionist, a Republican, a friend of Lincoln, and an egalitarian given to treating African Americans and whites equally.

On Jordan’s Banks
Kerry Pimblott

in Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois

Chapter One provides a broad historical overview of African American community formation in Cairo, illuminating how the region’s economic instability and distinct blend of northern and southern racial practices combined to solidify the Black church’s emergence as the leading institution in local community-building and protest traditions. This chapter argues that the Black church’s preeminence was not inevitable. It was instead a creative and necessary response to broader patterns of Black political marginalization and an absence of alternative institutions due to the precarious economic position of Cairo’s Black working-class.
The chapter also contends that the ability of Cairo’s Black churches to fill this organizational vacuum was made possible by the distinctive religious tradition harbored by African American communities across the borderland.