ASSIGNMENT—Read Fareed Zakaria's article, "What Bush Got Right". Below is a reading chart. As you read Zakaria's article, add information to your chart. After you have completed the chart, answer the essay question.

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ESSAY. Using this article as a resource, write a well-organized essay that evaluates President Bush's international diplomacy.
What Bush Got Right

For the next president, simply reversing this administration's policies is not the answer.

COMPARED WITH THE FLUTTERS AND FLURRIES OF the near-daily polls in the presidential race, one set of numbers has stayed fixed for months, even years. President George W. Bush now enters his 23rd consecutive month with an approval rating under 40 percent. (It currently stands at 32 percent.) No matter what he does, or what happens in the world, the public seems to have decided that Bush has been a failure. As a result, both candidates are promising a change from the Bush presidency. Barack Obama, of course, promises a wholly different approach to the
world. But even Bush's fellow Republican, John McCain, has on several issues suggested that he would depart from the administration's policies. McCain was last seen with the president at a fund-raiser more than two months ago at which no reporters or photographers were allowed.

A broad shift in America's approach to the world is justified and overdue. Bush's basic conception of a "global War on Terror," to take but the most obvious example, has been poorly thought-through, badly implemented, and has produced many unintended costs that will linger for years if not decades. But blanket criticism of Bush misses an important reality. The administration that became the target of so much passion and anger—from Democrats, Republicans, independents, foreigners, Martians, everyone—is not quite the one in place today. The foreign policies that aroused the greatest anger and opposition were mostly pursued in Bush's first term: the invasion of Iraq, the rejection of treaties, diplomacy and multilateralism. In the past few years, many of these policies have been modified, abandoned or reversed. This has happened without acknowledgment—which is partly what drives critics crazy—and it's often been done surreptitiously. It doesn't reflect a change of heart so much as an admission of failure; the old way simply wasn't working. But for whatever reasons and through whichever path, the foreign policies in place are now more sensible, moderate and mainstream. In many cases the next president should follow rather than reverse them.

Consider as a symbol of this shift Bush's appointment of the World Bank's president. His first choice for the job was Paul Wolfowitz, an arch neoconservative with little background in economics. But by the time Wolfowitz was forced to resign and the post opened up again, Bush realized that he needed a less ideological choice, and he picked the highly qualified and respected Robert Zoellick. Where Dick Cheney was once the poster child for the administration, today policy is being run by Condoleezza Rice, Robert Gates, Stephen Hadley and Hank Paulson—all pragmatists. Change has not extended to all areas, and in many places it's been too little, too late. But that there has been a shift to the center in many crucial areas of foreign policy is simply undeniable.

The most obvious case is Iraq. For many people—a clear majority of those polled—the decision to go to war is now seen as a mistake. But wherever one stands on that issue, it is overwhelmingly clear that the administration made a series of massive blunders in Iraq in 2003 and 2004. It went in with too few troops, dismanted Iraq's Army, bureaucracy and state-owned factories, arrested tens of thousands of Iraqis, mistreated and tortured some of them, and used overwhelming military force against all perceived threats. The outcome? Chaos; an angry, dispossessed and armed Sunni community; a sullen and restless Shiite population; an insurgency; a jihadist terrorist movement, and spreading sectarian violence. In addition, foreign forces were destabilizing the country because both the invasion and the occupation were undertaken without first gaining support from neighboring Arab states or winning international legitimacy. The result was a perfect storm in international affairs, a failure that kept getting worse.

For years, even after it was apparent to almost everyone that the Iraq strategy was not working, the administration stuck to its guns. But by 2005, the failure was simply too large to ignore, so some efforts to repair the situation were made—mostly tactical and incremental moves, like searching for a better Shiite leader and trying to slow down the process of de-Baathification. Some U.S. officials in Iraq freeloanced—for example, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad began the outreach to Sunni leaders and militants in 2006, even while his bosses in Washington were steadfastly condemning them as terrorists. American generals in Iraq were also learning from their own failures and advocating changes in tactics. (One of them was to support efforts by tribal sheiks in Anbar to take on their Qaeda rivals, which is why the Sunni Awakening actually proceeded.) By 2006, Bush told the Weekly Standard's Fred Barnes that he was searching for new approaches. But it was only after the 2006 midterm-election debacle that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was fired and a new politically-military strategy was put in place with a commander who understood the need for sweeping change.

It took a long time, but the turnaround in our policy in Iraq has been significant. The United States has made broad overtures to the Sunni community, and now actively supports Sunni fighters it had once jailed. We've concentrated on stabilizing Shiite neighborhoods, helping to free them from dependence on militias. We have abandoned dreams of a pure, free market, instead trying to jump-start Iraq's state-owned enterprises in order to create jobs. And we've even been pursuing a more regional approach, trying to get neighboring countries to open embassies in Baghdad and commit to help stabilize Iraq. None of this has changed some of the basic gruesome realities of Iraq—a country from which 2.5 million people have fled (mostly the professional class), thugs and militias rule in too many places, dysfunction and corruption are utterly endemic, and religious theocrats still wield immense power. But given where things were in 2005, the administration has moved firmly in the right direction.

On Afghanistan, there is a more compelling case to be made that the administration mishandled the most important front in the War on Terror. The central critique that Barack Obama makes—that American attention, energy, troops and resources were wrongly diverted from Afghanistan to Iraq—is devastating and hard to dispute. But it's a criticism of Bush policy in 2003. The policy that the administration is currently pursuing is less vulnerable to easy attacks.

Like Obama, Defense Secretary Gates has talked about sending more troops to the region. But the problem is bigger than a lack of American soldiers. European countries haven't contributed enough troops to the effort, and have put absurd restrictions on the forces they do have in theater. Afghanistan itself is extremely complex. The country contains vast swaths of mountainous territory that have never been ruled effectively by the central government, where levels of illiteracy and unemploy-
ment are stunningly high, and where Pashtun nationalism has got mixed up with Islam's extremism. Many serious scholars and local politicians argue that more troops would not solve the problem—particularly since the Taliban's back bases are located across the border in Pakistan. And the administration has ramped up spending in the region considerably. Whereas in 2003 it spent $737 million on reconstruction and equipping the Afghan Army, by 2007 it was spending $10 billion.

On North Korea, the administration's reversal has been near total. Within months of entering the Oval Office, Bush publicly repudiated his secretary of State, Colin Powell, for even suggesting that the administration would continue Bill Clinton's efforts to negotiate with Kim Jong II. But since July 2005, Bush has pursued a very similar approach, in fact an even more multilateral one than Clinton's—four additional parties are now at the table. Bringing in the Chinese has been crucial because they are the only ones who have any real leverage with Pyongyang. Bush began by describing North Korea as part of the Axis of Evil. Today he is considering taking the country off the terror list and has offered economic aid to its regime.

On Iran, the third charter member of the Axis of Evil, the administration has performed a similar about-face. Forget the muttering of various proponents of military action, periodically leaked to newspapers. The efforts of the administration have been diplomatic and multilateral. Its point-person for most of the second term was Nicholas Burns, a veteran diplomat who is viewed with great suspicion by neoconservatives. Last month one of the State Department's senior-most officials, William Burns (no relation), joined the Europeans at the table with Iranian negotiators, the first physical American involvement in these talks. One could argue—I would—that the administration's diplomacy is half-hearted and lacks ambition. An offer of direct engagement and negotiations would be a bolder step. But that's not a silver bullet. Such an offer could well prove fruitless. The principal obstacles to a negotiated settlement are Iranian intentions, suspicions and dysfunctions. The general thrust of Bush administration policies has now evolved into the correct one.

The same could be said for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Bush began his term in office vowing that he would not involve himself in Clinton-style efforts at peacemaking. His administration adopted a hands-off approach, allowing resentments to build and conditions to worsen. It gave free rein to irresponsible policies from all parties, encouraging, for example, a thoughtless and ill-planned Israeli attack on Lebanon that ended up weakening Israel, devastating Lebanon and empowering Hizbullah. This year Bush has plunged into the process, holding an international conference in Annapolis at which, for the first time, both Israel and the Palestinians accepted that the purpose of the exercise was to create a Palestinian state. Since that meeting, Rice has made a half dozen visits to the region. All this hasn't produced much yet, may be seven years too late, and perhaps is not the right approach (what is?). But few would argue that U.S. policy is currently on the wrong track.

The ones who would are revealing. Disgruntled conservative hard-liners have been dismayed by the administration's policy in many areas, particularly North Korea, Iran and Israel. John Bolton, formerly Bush's U.N. ambassador and a superhawk, publically makes the case for betrayal. When Burns joined the talks with Iran, Bolton fumed sarcastically on television that the State Department was obviously "doing its best to ensure a smooth transition to the Obama administration." (Obama has long advocated American negotiations with Tehran.) He described Bush's handling of North Korea as a capitulation, comparing him to Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. John Bolton is absolutely right that Bush has changed course fundamentally in many of these areas. Of course, I would celebrate that fact rather than condemn it.

Other reversals have drawn less opposition. In its early years the Bush administration seemed intent on confirming the conservative stereotype of being utterly uninterested in assistance to poor countries, especially if the money was going to treat AIDS patients. In each of its first two years it spent less than $1 billion on global HIV projects. This year the United States will spend almost $6 billion, most of it in Africa. The president's signature program, PEPFAR, has been a bipartisan success story (although the requirement that some of the money be spent on abstinence programs dilutes the program's effectiveness). Bush's overall efforts on disease prevention and aid have won him praise from an unusual assortment of figures—Bono, Bob Geldof and New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, who wrote that "George Bush has done much more for Africa than Bill Clinton ever did."

Politically the picture in Africa is more mixed. Bush put time, a presidential envoy and considerable effort behind the negotiations to broker a peace between north and south in Sudan, and he's made some similar attempts in Darfur. (These haven't yielded much, though mostly for reasons that cannot be blamed on the administration. More generally, however, the administration has been far too focused on the threat of terrorism, providing aid and military assistance to any and every regime—from Ethiopia to Equatorial Guinea—that claimed to be battling Al Qaeda. In a sad replay of the cold war, the United States has allied itself with unscrupulous dictators for no particular gain, only because they have learned to mouth the language of the Global War on Terror.

An obsession with terrorism has also made the administration devote too little time and energy to the defining feature of the new world order—"the rise of the rest," by which I mean the growth in economic and political power of countries like China, India, Russia, Brazil and a series of regionally prominent nations like South Africa, Nigeria, Mexico and Kazakhstan. In some cases its policy positions are divided and incoherent, as in the case of Russia. But in several crucial instances, they've pursued extremely sensible strategies.

The most important one, without question, is China. The bilateral relationship between China and America will be the most significant one in the 21st century. Bush began his term poorly on the subject. During the campaign, when asked by Larry King for the single most important area where he would depart from Clin-

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ton foreign policy, he cited China. “The current president has called the relationship with China a strategic partnership,” Bush said. “I believe our relationship needs to be redefined as one as competitor.” The initial months of the administration suggested that Bush would adopt a confrontational approach to Beijing, just as many neoconservatives and Pentagon strategists hoped.

Then in April 2001, four months into Bush’s presidency, a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft collided with a Chinese fighter plane about 70 miles from the Chinese island of Hainan, and was forced to make an emergency landing. The Chinese claimed that the American plane had entered and violated Chinese airspace; Washington argued that it was in international airspace. In order to recover the aircraft and crew, Washington had to negotiate with Beijing and—despite much conservative grumbling—Bush agreed to send the Chinese a “letter of two sorries,” in which the United States offered some carefully worded expressions of regret about the incident and death of the Chinese pilot.

Since then the administration’s China policy has moved toward recognizing the centrality of the relationship. If China can be brought into the existing world order—in some fashion and to some extent—that will greatly improve the prospects for future peace and stability. Bush, despite his grand rhetoric about spreading democracy around the world, has been practical in his relations with the Chinese regime. On the most important issue to Beijing—that of Taiwan—Bush not only sided with the Chinese but has done so in a more direct manner than any previous president. He made clear to the then Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian that were Taiwan to make any moves toward independence, the island would lose the support of the United States. More recently, unlike some heads of government in Europe, Bush chose to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, a move that will earn the United States much good will not just with the Chinese government but also with its people.

Of course, the administration recognizes that the rise of China upsets the strategic balance in Asia. That’s led Washington to deepen the strategic relationship with Japan and to develop a new one with India. In the latter case, Bush deserves credit for having transformed the relationship. While Indo-U.S. ties were warm under Bill Clinton, they were always limited by the controversy over India’s nuclear program. The Clintonites refused to legitimize India’s nuclear program, but for Indians their nukes were absolutely vital. Bush broke the deadlock by accepting, in large measure, that India would have to be treated as an exception and be brought into the nuclear nonproliferation regime as a nuclear power, not a renegade. Now India and America are developing a strategic relationship at many levels of government, which will stand both countries in good stead no matter what the future balance of power in Asia looks like.

If the United States hasn’t engaged with this emerging world actively enough, other countries have done even less. In an essay in Foreign Affairs, political scientist Daniel Drezner points out that the administration has sought to give China, India and Brazil more weight in international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the G8 and other such bodies. Timothy Adams, the undersecretary of Treasury, told The New York Times in August 2006 that “by re-engineering the IMF and giving China a bigger voice, China will have a greater sense of responsibility for the institution’s mission.”

The fiercest resistance to such reforms comes from Europe. If power in international organizations is going to be allocated on the basis of the current configuration of power, European nations, which are shrinking as a percentage of global GDP, will lose influence. If the U.N. Security Council were to be set up today, would 40 percent of the vetoes be given to European powers?

All this is not meant as a defense of George W. Bush. The administration made monumental errors in its first few years, ones that have cost the United States enormously. The shift in America’s intentions across important sections of the globe, the sense in much of the Islamic world that America is anti-Muslim, the vast and counterproductive apparatus of homeland security—visa restrictions, arrests and interrogations—are lasting legacies of the Bush administration. Its dysfunction and incompetence have left a trail of misery and disasters. Decades. The embrace of torture and other extralegal methods has violated America’s noblest traditions and provided little in return.

And then there is the administration’s record outside of foreign policy. Bush 43 has surely been the most fiscally irresponsible president in American history, taking surpluses that equaled 2.5 percent of GDP and turning them into deficits that are 3 percent. This is a $4 trillion hit on the country’s balance sheet. On the central issue of energy policy—the greatest economic challenge and opportunity of our times—Bush has been utterly obstructionist, recycling the self-serving arguments of industry lobbyists. On the whole, Bush’s record remains one of failure and missed opportunities.

So why offer this corrective? Because we cannot go back to 2001. The next president will inherit the world as it is in 2009. He will have to examine the Bush administration’s policies as they stand in January 2009—not as they were in 2001 or 2002 or 2003—and decide how to accept, modify and alter them. There was a U.S. president who came into office convinced that everything his predecessor had done was feckless, stupid, ill-informed and venal. He rejected and tried to reverse everything that he could, almost as an article of faith. Before he had even examined the policies carefully, he knew that they had to be changed. The base of his party was delighted by his clarity and fighting spirit.

That president, of course, was George W. Bush. His decision to blindly repudiate anything associated with Bill Clinton is what got us into this mess in the first place. Let’s hope that the next president, no matter how much he despises Bush, will take a careful look at his administration’s policies, America’s interests, and the world beyond and do the right thing for the country and its future.