"Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower" by Zbigniew Brzezinski, New York, 2007

Excerpt:

“Each of the three presidents since America's victory in the Cold War has been the world's most important player in the world's most important game, and each has played in his own way. At this stage, suffice it to say that Global Leader I [George H.W. Bush] was the most experienced and diplomatically skillful but was not guided by any bold vision at a very unconventional historic moment. Global Leader II [Bill Clinton] was the brightest and most futuristic, but he lacked strategic consistency in the use of American power. Global Leader III [George W. Bush] had strong gut instincts but no knowledge of global complexities and a temperament prone to dogmatic formulations.

The list below summarizes the fundamental changes in the global environment that occurred during the first decade and a half of America's unprecedented global primacy. These events are the basis on which the performance of the first three American global leaders will be appraised. The list shows, in capsule form, both the opportunities that were within America's reach and the steps leading to the increasingly complex crisis that superpower America now confronts.”

TEN MAJOR TURNING POINTS, 1990–2006

Key developments reshaping the world system.

1. The Soviet Union is forced out of Eastern Europe and disintegrates. The United States is on top of the world.

2. The U.S. military victory in the first Gulf War is politically wasted. Middle Eastern peace is not pursued. Islamic hostility toward the United States begins to rise.

3. NATO and the European Union expand into Eastern Europe. The Atlantic community emerges as the predominant influence on the world scene.

4. Globalization is institutionalized with the creation of the World Trade Organization, the new role of the International Monetary Fund with its bailout fund, and the increased anticorruption agenda of the World Bank. "Singapore issues" become the foundation for the Doha Round of WTO negotiations.
5. The Asian financial crisis sets the foundation for a nascent East Asian regional community, to be characterized either by Chinese dominance or by Sino-Japanese competition. China's admission to the WTO encourages its ascent as a major global economic player and a center of regional trade agreements with politically more assertive and impatient poorer countries.

6. Two Chechen wars, the NATO conflict in Kosovo, and Vladimir Putin's election as president of Russia contribute to a rise in Russian authoritarianism and nationalism. Russia exploits its gas and oil resources to become an assertive energy superpower.

7. Facing a permissive attitude from the United States and others, India and Pakistan defy world public opinion to become nuclear powers. North Korea and Iran intensify their covert efforts to acquire nuclear capabilities in the face of inconsistent and inconsequential U.S. efforts to induce their self-restraint.

8. September 11, 2001, shocks the United States into a state of fear and the pursuit of unilateral policies. The United States declares war on terror.

9. The Atlantic community splits over the U.S. war in Iraq. The European Union fails to develop its own political identity or clout.

10. The post–1991 worldwide impression of U.S. global military omnipotence and Washington's illusions about the extent of America's power have been shattered by U.S. failures in post-victory Iraq. The United States acknowledges the need for cooperation with the European Union, China, Japan, and Russia regarding major issues of global security. The Middle East becomes the make-or-break test case of U.S. leadership.