

---

# W Version 2.0: Foreign Policy in the Second Bush Term

LOUIS KLAREVAS

---

While campaigning against President George W. Bush for the presidency last year, Senator John Kerry (D-MA) predicted that if Bush were reelected, his foreign policy could be characterized by four simple words: “more of the same.”<sup>1</sup>

But early signals suggest that Kerry’s forecast is a bit amiss. There are indications that the *ends* of American foreign policy will be even more hard-line in the second term of the Bush administration, as realist influences are likely to grow. Arguably, though, the greatest difference will be evident not in the ends the new foreign policy team advocates, but in the *means* available to promote and protect American national interests. In this context, the success of the Bush administration in foreign affairs during its second term will depend largely on its ability to reconcile ends with means.

## THE CONSOLIDATION OF REALISM

The first change to be expected in the next term is an even greater emphasis on the realist worldview, and on policies which naturally flow from such a perspective. Realism is an international relations paradigm based on four tenets: (1) states, especially major powers, are the primary agents in international politics; (2) states selfishly pursue their national interests, the most vital being national security; (3) material capabilities, especially offensive military capabilities, are the most important resources in the pursuit of national interests; and (4) international politics is distinct from domestic politics because the former is anarchic. As

---

*Louis Klarevas is a professor of international relations at City University of New York’s College of Staten Island, and at New York University’s Center for Global Affairs. In 2003, he served as Defense Analysis Research Fellow at the London School of Economics. He is currently working on a book tentatively titled Till Death Do U.S. Part: Exploring America’s Growing Aversion to Casualties.*

---

a practical consequence non-state actors are discounted, unilateralism is more reliable than multilateralism, military force is a privileged means to an end, and, in the final analysis, international law and human rights are expendable because morality is never universal. In this grim view, world politics is an arena of relentless, often threatening, competition among states.<sup>2</sup>

If one examines the composition of the foreign policy team of the first George W. Bush administration (W 1.0), one sees a mixed team of advisers. Most were hard-line realists, like National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and

---

*“In Bush’s second term team (W 2.0), however, there is a noticeable change. The realists have grown in reach and significance. This change has been spurred in large part by the resignation of every major internationalist—nearly all of whom have been replaced (so far) by realists.”*

---

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.<sup>3</sup> However, several, such as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, were neoconservatives (“neocons”).<sup>4</sup> Some other key players were internationalists, like Secretary of the Treasury Paul O’Neill and Secretary of State Colin Powell.<sup>5</sup>

Policies during the first Bush administration seemed to reflect a mix of all three of these schools, although realist and neo-conservative objectives were more prevalent than internationalist ones. For instance, the prioritization of national defense and politics among great powers—especially the emphasis on a missile shield, and the return to a war-fighting capability in order to curb the ambitions of hostile powers—were textbook examples of realist-based foreign policies. The harsher attitude toward authoritarian states coupled with an emphasis on regime change in rogue states—especially Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—were classic examples of a “neocon” agenda. Meanwhile, the championing of developmental assistance and AIDS initiatives were pages taken right out of the internationalist playbook.

In Bush’s second term team (W 2.0), however, there is a noticeable change. The realists have grown in reach and significance. This change has been spurred in large part by the resignation of every major internationalist—nearly all of whom have been replaced (so far) by realists. Moreover, although some of the “neocons” are still present, none of them has been elevated to a position of greater importance.

During the 2004 presidential election, the composition of Bush’s next foreign policy team was unclear. But the President sent an unambiguous message immediately after his reelection: loyalists who saw eye-to-eye with him would be sticking around. Perhaps the most surprising of those remaining is Donald Rumsfeld. An organized call for his resignation had followed his involvement in

---

---

the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal. Although he survived the calls for removal, many speculated that he would not be retained for a second term. President Bush, however, clearly had a different take on Rumsfeld's value to the national security community. Condoleezza Rice is another rewarded loyalist. With her move from the White House to the State Department, an (attempted) realist shake-up of a traditionally internationalist bureaucracy is to be expected.<sup>6</sup> Realists will now be at the helm of America's two most important foreign affairs cabinet departments.

However, Rumsfeld's renewal and Rice's promotion are only the beginnings of the realist solidification. The appointments of Stephen Hadley as National Security Adviser, Porter Goss as Central Intelligence Agency Director, Michael Chertoff as Secretary of Homeland Security, and Alberto Gonzales as Attorney General, also bring hard-liners receptive to realism to positions of power.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of foreign policy, then, we should expect a corresponding two-pronged national security strategy:

- The preservation of U.S. primacy, with an emphasis on increasing and exploiting America's military advantages—multilaterally if readily feasible, unilaterally if not;
- The maintenance of homeland security—especially against rogue states and terrorists set on using weapons of mass destruction—with an emphasis on defense through missile shields, and on offense through smaller, quicker, and more technologically advanced military forces.

Such a strategy, if promoted in a realist fashion, will involve a strong state-centric approach, with an emphasis on security, a stress on hard power, and unilateral approaches to international problems and threats. Each of these components is discussed below.

One way to characterize a realist foreign policy and its emphasis on the state is in terms of what not to expect (and here, the contrast between Bush and Clinton becomes evident). For example, we should not expect greater Bush administration attention to non-state actors in world affairs. While rock star activist Bono was able to come calling on the Bush team during the first term, even traveling to Africa with former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill to put the plight of the poor and the AIDS-stricken onto the international political agenda, Bono should expect no such warm welcomes during the second term. That Bono's stock has decreased is hardly shocking. After all, it was not so long ago that President Bush, referring to Osama bin Laden, admitted, "I truly am not that concerned about him."<sup>8</sup> If the mastermind of the greatest surprise attack against the American homeland is decreasing in relevance, imagine how insignificant

---

other non-state actors might become to the Bush team.

We should not look forward to an aggressive pursuit of developmental, humanitarian, environmental, and cultural goals.<sup>9</sup> These issue-areas are secondary to realists, who concern themselves first and foremost with security. To the extent that such issues make it to the top of the agenda, it will often be because they

---

*“The United States has tremendous material resources available to it for purposes of inducement and coercion. Realists tend to overvalue this hard power, and to undervalue soft power. Soft power—the ability to attain outcomes through appeal and attraction—has become the everyday currency of international relations.”*

---

contribute to American national security. As the 2002 *National Security Strategy* reveals, even poverty is now addressed predominantly in terms of security interests: “Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.”<sup>10</sup>

Nor should we await any heroic efforts to attract others to a Bush administration agenda. The United States has tremendous material resources available to it for purposes of inducement and coercion. Realists tend to overvalue this hard power, and to undervalue soft power. Soft power—the ability to attain outcomes through appeal and attraction—has become the everyday currency of international relations.

In dealing with most actors and issues, soft power has proven itself to be hard power’s significant other. Soft power is cost-effective and safe. As a parallel, in the old adage of catching flies, soft power is the honey and hard power is the vinegar. But as Harvard professor Joseph Nye notes:

The administration understands hard military power, but it has largely failed to combine it with equally important soft power...Despite initial outpourings of sympathy following 9/11, anti-Americanism has increased sharply over the past two years, with serious consequences for American foreign policy...We are squandering our soft power.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, we should not expect a heavy reliance on multilateral approaches that emphasize the United Nations and international law. Colin Powell pushed for UN authorization for an invasion of Iraq. But after it became clear that a subsequent Security Council resolution unambiguously authorizing an invasion would not be forthcoming, the Bush team eschewed multilateralism—and it has not seriously looked back since. Iraq has not been the only example for which global legal frameworks have been shunned. The Bush team has exhibited interest in neither the Kyoto Protocol on the environment nor the Rome Treaty estab-

---

---

lishing the International Criminal Court. Such positions have been coupled with a dubious reading of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and the Geneva Conventions to abdicate its obligations to foreigners under U.S. detention in order to promote American security interests. In the next four years, if the Bush administration pursues a realist agenda, we should continue to see a discounting of multilateral institutions and international law.

We have already seen the trappings of the two-pronged national security strategy and its realist elements in the current war on terror. Despite being attacked by al-Qaeda, a non-state actor, the U.S. response—toppling the governing regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq—was largely state-centric. Likewise, despite other benefits of going to war (namely, the economic benefit of access to Iraqi oil, and the developmental and cultural benefits of promoting democracy in the Middle East and South Asia), the missions have largely been viewed through the lens of national security. As President Bush recently said in reference to his decision to invade Iraq, “I made the decision I made, in order to protect our country, first and foremost.”<sup>12</sup> To defend these presumed vital security interests, the military has been employed in a largely offensive and preemptive fashion, exploiting America’s hard power. Indeed, when the United States failed to secure an unambiguous UN Security Council resolution authorizing it to go to war against Iraq under the auspices of multilateralism and international law, it acted in a quasi-unilateral fashion to remove Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from power.

#### **A STARKLY DIFFERENT REALITY**

Just as realists and their hard-line objectives are likely to be more prominent in W 2.0, the global conditions facing them in 2005—largely shaped by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and recent economic trends—are even less conducive to the pursuit of a realist agenda than they were in 2001.

In particular, two material facts characterize the current state of affairs, and these impose significant limitations on the exercise of power by the United States. First, the U.S. military is overcommitted, and as a result, spread too thinly around the world. The Pentagon has extended tours of duty for those serving in conflict zones and supplemented active duty soldiers with a large number of reservists and National Guardsmen.<sup>13</sup> Such measures have left many soldiers disgruntled, which in turn undermines troop morale, vigilance, and performance.<sup>14</sup>

Observers, furthermore, continue to criticize the administration for not committing more troops and better equipment to Afghanistan and (especially) Iraq.<sup>15</sup> So far, the administration has held firm in its conviction to secure the peace in both areas through limited force. The administration, nevertheless, will have to deal with the fact that in the coming year its “coalition of the willing” will

---

continue to dwindle in size and strength.<sup>16</sup> This means that, at a time when more troops and resources will be needed, even fewer will be available.

The obvious implication is that the United States will have its work cut out for it in Afghanistan and Iraq. The more significant consequence, however, is that it will not have the manpower and equipment to meet other security threats that might arise and require military solutions. As Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, argues, "The war of choice against Iraq has narrowed choices elsewhere for U.S. foreign policy."<sup>17</sup> Cognizant of such realities, other rogue states, such as North Korea, Iran, and Syria, might feel less vulnerable to American pressures and threats, and consequently they may be further

---

*"...the United States will have its work cut out for it in Afghanistan and Iraq. The more significant consequence, however, is that it will not have the manpower and equipment to meet other security threats that might arise and require military solutions."*

---

emboldened to develop weapons of mass destruction, support terrorism, and skirt international law. Moreover, crises not necessarily involving U.S. strategic national interests—but that can nonetheless be addressed with significant and sustained military commitments—are likely to be either ignored or passed on to regional forces. The limited American response to genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan exemplifies the inability of the United States to address complex humanitarian crises.

Second, the United States is running the largest budget deficit (in dollar terms) in American history, exceeding \$425 billion in fiscal year 2005. This figure represents a gross difference from the \$127 billion surplus reflected in President Clinton's final budget (FY 2001).<sup>18</sup> Theoretically, budget deficits demand fiscal responsibility and the resulting spending cuts can translate into restrictions on policy. The White House has, for instance, ordered an adjusted freeze on spending for domestic discretionary programs to assist in deficit management.<sup>19</sup>

The economic problems facing the United States are further compounded by tax cuts, increased federal debt, and looming shortfalls in the Social Security and Medicare programs as the baby-boomer generation reaches retirement age.<sup>20</sup> A minimum \$2 trillion increase in federal debt is projected as necessary to meet obligations resulting from four administration programs alone:

1. \$1 trillion over 10 years to cover proposed permanent tax cuts;
  2. \$500 billion to avoid an increase in the alternative minimum tax;
  3. \$500 billion to cover the new Medicare prescription program; and
  4. \$80 billion for the Iraq War in 2005.<sup>21</sup>
-

With the new federal debt ceiling reaching \$8.2 trillion, Senator Kerry has characterized the dilemma in beggar's terms: "To pay our bills, America now goes cup in hand to nations like China, Korea, Taiwan, and Caribbean banking centers... Those issues didn't go away on November 3, no matter what the results."<sup>22</sup>

These economic factors do not bode well for exercising American power. As Geoffrey Kemp of The Nixon Center acknowledges, "We can't have a war that is at this point unwinnable and costs soaring, and a military that desperately needs more support. That means a net rise in the defense budget, but we can't do that and have a tax cut and reform Social Security—and not have us pay a price for it."<sup>23</sup> There is only so much the United States can afford to do. The bottom line is that economic difficulties will constrain military flexibility during President Bush's second term.<sup>24</sup>

The problem of inadequate means facing the new foreign policy team is well-captured in a report being prepared by a Georgetown University group, chaired by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger. It reads: "Bush has less global flexibility post-Iraq, broad resistance to U.S. leadership initiatives... diminished U.S. influence in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, demonstrable limits on assembling 'coalitions of the willing,' stretched U.S. forces and skepticism about America's veracity and competence."<sup>25</sup> As this implies, a realist foreign policy agenda is likely to be drastically undermined by military and economic realities.

#### THE DANGER OF A REALISM-REALITY DISCONNECT

A realist agenda that seeks to preserve U.S. primacy and secure the American homeland by privileging hard power unilateralist strategies is certainly ambitious. The reality, however, is that American aspirations will be heavily restricted by limited military and financial resources: constraints on means force constraints on ends. The big question that the new Bush foreign policy team will have to wrestle with is the following: is there a disconnect between the team's realism and the United States' realities? In other words, are realist ends the right ends for the United States to be pursuing and promoting? If not, what should be the next set of ends for the new Bush team? Moreover, are the means available to the United States appropriate for securing its new ends? If not, how can these ends and means be reconciled? With the new term now several months old, these remain the vital questions the second Bush administration must address as it formulates and implements its foreign policy. ■

#### NOTES

1 Quoted in "Transcript of the Candidates' First Debate in the Presidential Campaign," *The New York Times*, October 1, 2004, A20.

2 See Klarevas, "Political Realism: A Culprit for the 9/11 Attacks," *Harvard International Review* 26 (3) (Fall 2004): 19; and John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 17-54.

- 
- 3 For more on realist elements in the first term of the Bush administration, see Klarevas, "Political Realism": 18-23.
  - 4 For more on neoconservative elements in the first term of the Bush administration, see Max Boot, "Neocons," *Foreign Policy* 140 (January/February 2004): 20-28.
  - 5 For more on the internationalist elements in the first term of the Bush administration, see Michael Hirsh, *At War with Ourselves: Why America Is Squandering Its Chance to Build a Better World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
  - 6 See, for example, Mike Allen, "Rice Is Named Secretary of State," the *Washington Post*, November 17, 2004, A1; and David S. Broder, "Tight Little Cabinet," the *Washington Post*, December 15, 2003, A33.
  - 7 See, for example, Glenn Kessler, "Moves Cement Hard-Line Stance on Foreign Policy," the *Washington Post*, November 16, 2004, A1; and Andrew Newman, "Bush's Nest of Hawks," *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), November 23, 2004, 21.
  - 8 Press conference with President George W. Bush, March 13, 2002 (accessed February 19, 2005); <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020313-8.html>>.
  - 9 Some people might question this statement, citing the U.S. reaction to the 2005 Asian tsunami to support their argument. While the United States did ultimately pledge \$350 million to the relief effort, it only pledged an initial \$15 million. There are some indications that it was not until outgoing (internationalist) Secretary of State Colin Powell pressed hard for more assistance that the administration became more committed to the relief effort. See Edwin Chen, "Bush Adapts, But Won't Call It That," the *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 2005, A7; and Hardball, MSNBC, transcript for January 5, 2005 (accessed February 19, 2005); available from Lexis-Nexis.
  - 10 The National Security Strategy of the United States, September 2002, (Washington, DC: White House, 2002) (accessed February 19, 2005); <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>>.
  - 11 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Lonely at the Top," *The Boston Globe*, March 28, 2004, C1.
  - 12 Press conference with President George W. Bush, November 4, 2004 (accessed February 19, 2005); <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/11/20041104-5.html>>.
  - 13 See, for example, Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "Army to Call Up Recruits Earlier," *The New York Times*, July 22, 2004, A1; and Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bush to Back Pentagon Plan to Redeploy 70,000 Troops," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2004, A6.
  - 14 See, for example, Neela Banerjee and Ariel Hart, "Inquiry Opens After Reservists Balk in Baghdad," *The New York Times*, October 16, 2004, A1; Monica Davey, "Eight Soldiers Plan to Sue Over Army Tours of Duty," *The New York Times*, December 6, 2004, A15; Eric Schmitt, "Troops' Queries Leave Rumsfeld On the Defensive," *The New York Times*, December 9, 2004, A1; and Monica Davey, "The New Military Life: Heading Back to the War," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2004, A1.
  - 15 See, for example, Eric Schmitt, "General Warns of a Looming Shortage of Specialists," *The New York Times*, September 17, 2004, A16; Elisabeth Bumiller and Jodi Wilgoren, "Ex-Administrator's Remark Puts Bush on the Defensive," *The New York Times*, October 6, 2004, A22; "Costly Troops Deficit in Iraq," *The New York Times*, November 22, 2004, A26; "Please, Sir, May I Have Some Armor?" *The New York Times*, December 9, 2004, A40; Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Armor Scarce for Heavy Trucks Transporting U.S. Cargo in Iraq," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2004, A1; Phillip Carter, "How the Front Lines Came to the Rear," *The New York Times*, December 12, 2004, D13; and Bob Herbert, "War on the Cheap," *The New York Times*, December 20, 2004, A29.
  - 16 Robin Wright, "Bush Is Urged to Quickly Outline Foreign Policy Goals," the *Washington Post*, January 2, 2005, A21.
  - 17 Quoted in Glenn Kessler, "President Signals No Major Shift in Foreign Policy," the *Washington Post*, November 7, 2004, A1.
  - 18 See, for example, Jonathan Weisman, "Record '05 Deficit Forecast," the *Washington Post*, January 26, 2005, A1; and David E. Rosenbaum, "White House Says \$445 Billion Deficit Forecast Isn't as Bad as It Looks," *The New York Times*, July 31, 2004, A13.
  - 19 Edmund L. Andrews, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Bill," *The New York Times*, January 2, 2005, C1.
  - 20 See, for example, Edmund L. Andrews, "Deficit Analysis and Bush Differ," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2004, A1.
  - 21 Andrews, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Bill."
  - 22 Quoted in Edmund L. Andrews, "Senate Votes to Raise Federal Debt Limit," *The New York Times*, November 8, 2004, A20. Prior to the increase in the debt limit, the Treasury Department was forced to tap into civil service retirement accounts to cover financial responsibilities.
  - 23 Quoted in Wright, "Bush Is Urged to Quickly Outline Foreign Policy Goals."
-

- 
- 24 Two other factors that might also impact the availability of foreign policy means (albeit to a lesser extent) are the Asian tsunami and the trade deficit. See, for example, *ibid.*; Thom Shanker and James Brooke, "Tsunami Tests U.S. Forces' Logistics, but Gives Pentagon a Chance to Show a Human Face," *The New York Times*, January 9, 2005, A11; and Elizabeth Becker, "Trade Deficit at New High, Reinforcing Risk to Dollar," *The New York Times*, January 13, 2005, C1.
- 25 Quoted in Wright, "Bush Is Urged to Quickly Outline Foreign Policy Goals." While a small part of the Schlesinger Report is excerpted in *ibid.*, the report has not yet been publicly released by Georgetown University.

