

The Future of US Foreign Policy

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Introduction

It would appear that Americans are now disenchanted with neo-conservatism as a foreign-policy doctrine. Five years ago, the idea of muscular, unilaterally-imposed democratization was believed to resonate with American values in a post-9/11 world. This is no longer the case. In October 2006, a Public Agenda poll found that 83 % of Americans are worried about the way things are going for the United States in world affairs. Their new »Anxiety Indicator« found that »a significant majority of the public is feeling anxious and insecure about the country's place in the world.« Iraq – an obsession of neo-conservatives for over a decade now – is obviously a major cause of this discontent. In November 2006, a CBS News poll found three-quarters of Americans disapproving of the President's handling of Iraq; only 4 % of those surveyed supported staying the course. The 2007 »surge« has had little effect on public opinion: by the summer of 2007, the majority of Americans disapproved of US policy in Iraq and the US-led global war on terrorism.¹

The disillusionment with neo-conservatism is not merely a rejection of President George W. Bush. Senator John McCain, the 2008 presidential candidate most closely associated with neo-conservatism, was considered the GOP frontrunner a year ago. Since then, McCain has been hemorrhaging staff and money as his popular support has plummeted. One of the triggers of this collapse was an ill-advised April 2007 stroll through a Baghdad marketplace, after which his claims about improved security rang hollow.² The more McCain associated himself with the invasion of Iraq, the worse his campaign performed.

1. http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/ssi/polls/postpoll_072307.html, accessed July 2007.

2. Jonathan Alter, »McCain's Meltdown,« April 16, 2007. Accessed at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17995774/site/newsweek/page/0/>, July 2007.

Neo-conservatism will formally expire as the grand strategy of the United States on January 20, 2009: the date George W. Bush leaves office. What will take its place? There are myriad ways in which US foreign policy could diverge from the neo-conservative approach. European allies are impatiently waiting for a change in US foreign policy, hoping for a more multilateral and less military-focused approach. Americans also desire change – but the direction that change will take remains unclear.

In order to project how US foreign policy will change after George W. Bush leaves office, this analysis surveys what the mass public, powerful interest groups, and expert *cognoscenti* think about American foreign policy. Combined, these actors create clear incentives, ideas, and constraints for the future direction of US foreign policy. It then examines the foreign-policy positions articulated to date by the major presidential candidates on both sides of the aisle. Predictions are a foolhardy business, but the analysis presented here suggests that the next president will pursue a mix of *realpolitik* and liberal tenets in devising a grand strategy. The precise mixture depends to a large degree on who wins the 2008 presidential election. For Europeans, the good news is that, regardless of who becomes president, the United States will be willing to pursue a more pragmatic, multilateral set of policies in the future. The lesser good news is twofold: first, interest group pressures will ensure that some policies that roil Europeans will remain unchanged; second, multilateralism means something different to Americans than it does to Europeans – this divergence of understanding will lead to policy frictions down the road.

The Public Mood³

The foreign policy of George W. Bush has been suffused with a missionary zeal to promote American values across the globe. In his second inaugural address, Bush said:

»From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and Earth. Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government,

3. This section draws on Daniel W. Drezner, »The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion,« *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (March 2008: forthcoming).

because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave. *Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation.*«

Bush's articulation of democratic idealism references the powerful idea of American exceptionalism. According to this concept, the history of the United States has enabled a liberal worldview of international relations to develop unfettered by concerns over *realpolitik*. Separated from the great power squabbles of Europe, the United States emerged as a great power relatively unscathed by foreign invasion, military occupation, or economic deprivation. A liberal internationalist approach to foreign affairs – the promotion of free trade, democracy, human rights, and adherence to the rule of law – was thought to be the most symbiotic with the liberal tradition in domestic politics.⁴ Liberal internationalism is consistent within America's self-image as »a shining city on a hill.« Democracy promotion in particular is rooted in America's national identity and national security strategy.

Neo-conservatism borrows many ideas from liberal internationalism, though it promotes those ideas in terms of more expansive aims and aggressive methods. The first sentence of the March 2006 National Security Strategy reads, »It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.«⁵ Like liberal internationalists, neo-conservatives believe that the spread of free markets, democratic values, and human rights leads to a more prosperous and pacific world. But neo-conservatives reject the »third leg« of the Kantian triad: multilateralism. Whereas liberals put greater faith in international institutions as a means of promoting American interests, neo-conservatives view them as constraints on US action: in place of multilateral agreements, neo-conservatives prefer more unilateral and more forceful means of promoting regime change.

The debacle in Iraq has clearly turned the American people against this kind of worldview. Furthermore, three decades of public opinion polling reveal that Americans have never been enthusiastic about this kind of neo-conservative foreign policy: when Americans are asked which issues should be thought of as »top priorities,« the responses suggest a public

4. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace 1955); Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

5. Accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/sectionI.html>, July 2, 2007.

that is much more comfortable with the concept of *realpolitik* than previously thought. Table 1 shows the support for different foreign-policy goals, as surveyed by Pew Charitable Trusts and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). The table reveals that policy priorities conventionally categorized in the liberal internationalist tradition – promoting democracy, advocating human rights, and strengthening the United Nations – are considered low-priority. The only altruistic issue that earned more than 70% support was the prevention of AIDS and other epidemics.⁶ In contrast, realist priorities – protecting against terrorist attacks, protecting American jobs, ensuring adequate energy supplies – all scored better than 70% support. As Table 2 shows, these preferences remain consistent, even in polls taken prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

This wariness reflects the lack of trust Americans have in the rest of the world. A series of recent panel studies found that Americans were cynical about the outside world. Over 70% of respondents agreed that »the US can't be too careful« in dealing with other countries; 65% of Americans rejected the idea that other countries try to help the US; instead, they said that other countries were »just looking out for themselves.« They concluded that »most Americans see the realm of international relations as resembling the ›state of nature‹ described by Hobbes. Put more simply, they see it as a ›dog-eat-dog‹ world.«⁷ Public Agenda's foreign policy polling – conducted in summer 2005 and winter 2006 – confirms the self-interested nature of the American public.⁸ In both surveys, more than 60% of respondents agreed that the United States was »already doing more than our share to help out less fortunate countries.«⁹

These two polling results hint at a pattern of American attitudes toward foreign-policy priorities. Americans aspire to liberal ideals, but when asked to choose among competing policy priorities, realist principles

6. Even this response does not necessarily reflect a liberal worldview. Given American hostility to inward flows of drugs and migration, and given the 2001 anthrax scare, the concern about epidemics could be related to concerns about personal security rather than altruism. On this point, see Daniel W. Drezner, *All Politics Is Global* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 184–90.

7. Paul Brewer et al., International Trust and Public Opinion about World Affairs, *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (January 2004): 93–109, p. 105.

8. Ana Maria Arumi and Scott Brittle, »Public Agenda Confidence in U.S. Foreign Policy Index,« *Public Agenda*, Vol. 2 (Winter 2006). Accessed at: <http://www.publicagenda.org> (April 15, 2006).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Table 1:
Foreign Policy Priorities, 2001–2004

<i>Issue area</i>	<i>Percentage of Americans considering issue a »top priority«</i>		
	<i>Early Sep- tember 2001</i>	<i>October 2001</i>	<i>July 2004</i>
Protect against terrorist attacks	80	93	88
Protect jobs of American workers	77	74	84
Reduce spread of AIDS & other diseases	73	59	72
Stop spread of weapons of mass destruction	78	81	71
Insure adequate energy supplies	74	69	70
Reduce dependence on foreign oil	–	–	63
Combat international drug trafficking	64	55	63
Distribute costs of maintaining world order	56	54	58
Improve relationships with allies	–	–	54
Deal with problem of world hunger	47	34	50
Strengthen the United Nations	42	46	48
Protect groups threatened with genocide	49	48	47
Deal with global warming	44	31	36
Reduce U.S. military commitments	26	–	35
Promote U.S. business interests abroad	37	30	35
Promote human rights abroad	29	27	33
Solve Israeli/Palestinian conflict	–	–	28
Promote democracy abroad	29	24	24
Improve living standards in poor nations	25	20	23

Source: Pew/CFR survey, »Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 and Iraq.«
<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=865>, August 2004.

Table 2:
Foreign Policy Priorities, 1990–2006

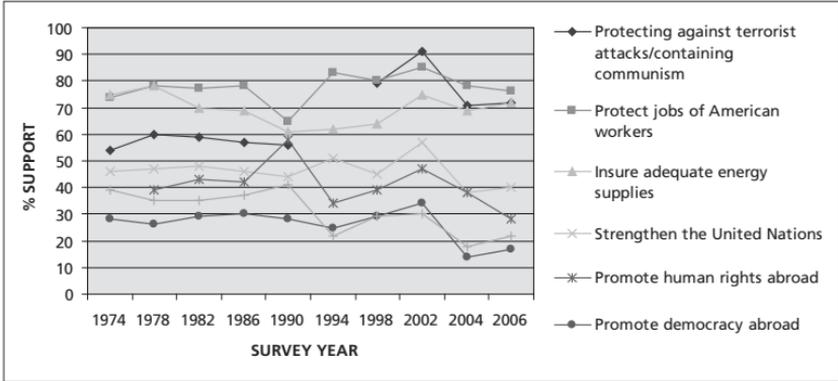
<i>Policy goal</i>	2006	2004	2002	1998	1994	1990
Protect against terrorist attacks	72	71	91	79	–	–
Protect jobs of American workers	76	78	85	80	83	65
Stop spread of weapons of mass destruction	74	73	90	82	82	59
Controlling and reducing illegal immigration	58	59	70	55	72	–
Insure adequate energy supplies	72	69	75	64	62	61
Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S.	–	63	81	81	85	–
Reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries	–	–	51	50	59	56
Maintaining superior military power worldwide	55	50	68	59	50	–
Deal with problem of world hunger	48	43	61	62	56	–
Strengthen the United Nations	40	38	57	45	51	44
Improving the global environment	54	47	66	53	58	58
Promote U.S. business interests abroad	–	32	49	–	–	63
Promote human rights abroad	28	–	47	39	34	58
Promote democracy abroad	17	14	34	29	25	28
Improve living standards in poor nations	22	18	30	29	22	41

Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, »Public Opinion & Foreign Policy,« available at http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/past_pos.php.

come to the fore. Figure 1 presents Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) data on top foreign-policy priorities over the past 30 years and finds a result similar to the Pew/CFR surveys. Over the past few cycles, realist priorities, emphasizing security and autonomy, have consistently earned more than 60 % support from the mass public, while liberal policy priorities, emphasizing democracy promotion and human rights, have consistently earned less than 50 % support. As figure 1 demonstrates, the top-ranking policy priorities for the past three decades – protecting American jobs, securing energy supplies – have a realist aspect to them. In contrast, Americans have consistently attributed less importance to liberal

internationalist policy priorities: democracy promotion, human rights, and strengthening the United Nations.

Figure 1:
Foreign Policy Priorities, 1974–2004



Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, »Public Opinion & Foreign Policy,« available at http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/past_pos.php

The CCGA surveys would appear to reveal support for multilateralism as well. Most Americans strongly support multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization and NATO. More than 70 % of Americans supported American participation in the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol to combat global warming.¹⁰ A healthy majority of Americans – including conservatives and Republicans – would support giving up America’s veto on the UN Security Council if that were to lead to a more effective global body. A similarly large majority of Americans endorses giving the UN limited powers of taxation to raise a standing multilateral force. Regarding questions about going to war or deploying American forces as peacekeepers, public support is highly contingent on whether there is multilateral support for such action. When told that either the United Nations or NATO will contribute to a peace-keeping mission, American support for the mission jumps by as many as 30 points.

10. Steven Kull and I.M. Destler, *Misreading the Public* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution 1999), chapters 3 and 4; Benjamin Page with Marshall Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), chapter 5.

But a second look at the data suggests a realist motivation behind the support for multilateral institutions: the main reason Americans support international organizations is that they can facilitate burden-sharing. In the 2002 CCGA survey, for example, 71% of Americans preferred the US to »do its share to solve international problems together with other countries,« while only 17% supported the US »be[ing] the preeminent world leader to solve international problems.«¹¹ This survey also showed that over 80% of Americans support »the European Union [being] more involved in the negotiations while also bearing more of the political and economic costs«¹² in the Middle East. Americans view multilateralism both as a means of enhancing global governance and as a means of redistributing costs from the United States to other countries.

A closer examination of public attitudes towards the ICC and the Kyoto Protocol shows that support for multilateralism – as an abstract principle – is also weak: although a majority of Americans endorse the ICC as a concept, a majority also opposes allowing US soldiers to be tried in The Hague. This is in sharp contrast to France, Germany, and the UK, where majorities supported having their soldiers tried by the ICC. Similarly, on global warming, a strong majority of Americans wants poorer countries to bear as much of the burden in dealing with global warming as richer nations.¹³ Sifting through the data, Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes conclude that »[i]f asked to choose, Americans prefer proactive, assertive unilateral action to multilateral efforts beset by delay and compromise.«¹⁴

A 2006 Bertelsmann Foundation poll crystallizes how Americans differ from other nationalities in thinking about international cooperation.¹⁵ Citizens from different countries were asked to choose between the best frameworks for ensuring peace and security. Americans agreed with other populations in rejecting a world led by an unrivaled hegemon, but they

11. Marshall Bouton (ed.), *Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion & Foreign Policy* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations 2002), p. 26 (emphasis added). The other 9% of respondents preferred the isolationist policy option.

12. Page and Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect*, pp. 150–51.

13. Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World* (New York: Times Books 2006), pp. 179–80.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

15. »Poll of 9 Major Nations Finds All, including U.S., Reject World System Dominated by Single Power in Favor of Multipolarity.« Accessed at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/208.php?nid=&cid=&cpnt=208&lb=btvoc (November 2006).

differed in choosing among the remaining options: (i) »a system led by the United Nations« or (ii) a balance of regional powers. The United States was the only country in the survey in which a majority supported a concert of regional powers over UN leadership. Whereas other countries value multilateralism as an intrinsic good, Americans view it as a means to advance American interests while reducing enforcement costs.¹⁶

This utilitarian view of multilateralism is reflected in official discourse as well. For decades, Washington officialdom has been consistent on this point: when multilateral rules are broken, be they IMF lending agreements or UN Security Council resolutions, the US will use the necessary means to enforce the norms underlying those multilateral institutions. Multilateral institutions that fail to enforce their own norms – such as the UN Human Rights Council – end up becoming a bipartisan object of scorn. Those institutions that are seen as effective – such as the WTO – are shown greater deference. The Bush administration merely reflects the most extreme version of this attitude.¹⁷

Despite the mass public's lukewarm attitude toward it, neo-conservatism has been on the rise for the past half-decade. This leads to a reasonable question: does public opinion matter? In the long term, the answer is »yes.« Presidents can implement policies that are unpopular with the public for short periods of time, but if those policies do not succeed quickly, they face a backlash at the polls. President Bush was able to win re-election in 2004 because the war in Iraq was less than 18 months old. As the resulting costs of that conflict became increasingly clear, support for President Bush and his foreign policy started to decline. The 2006 midterm elections were, in many ways, a referendum on Bush's foreign policy – and he lost.

It is also worth remembering that the public hangover from the last foreign policy misstep of this magnitude lasted for quite a while. After the Vietnam War, the public was profoundly skeptical of interventionist policies for the next five years. In one poll published in 1975, for example, only 14 % favored US military involvement if North Korea attacked South Korea. Other polls taken during the same period also suggested a strong

16. For more on this, see Daniel W. Drezner, »Lost in Translation: The Transatlantic Divide over Diplomacy,« in Jeffrey Kopstein and Sven Steinmo (eds), *Growing Apart: America and Europe in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

17. *Ibid.*

isolationist streak with regard to Asia.¹⁸ Because of this public sentiment, Congress thwarted President Ford's desire to intervene in the Angolan civil war. This reluctance to intervene persisted until the end of the Cold War. Until after the US pulls out of Iraq, it is unlikely to deploy large numbers of US forces elsewhere anytime soon.

The Interest Group Environment

Single-issue interest groups are a powerful force in American politics, but their effect on foreign policy is somewhat different than on domestic politics. The most powerful domestic lobbies – the American Association of Retired Persons, the American Federation of Teachers, or the National Rifle Association – do not care much about foreign policy. Interest groups tend to concentrate their efforts on policies that can distribute or generate significant resources, and most foreign policies do not fall into that category.

Paradoxically, this *increases* the influence of interest groups that *do* care about foreign policy. A thin organizational environment means that the remaining interest groups can wield disproportionate power over their particular issue. Some groups are powerful enough to have »captured« the policy machinery on a particular issue. An inattentive public means that interest groups can often lobby for policies that command minimal support – so long as they are implemented far away from the public eye.¹⁹

Three kinds of interest groups hold particular sway over narrow aspects of American foreign policy. Trade-related interest groups will be willing to invest large sums to ensure Congress protects the status quo if this serves their interests. For example, the United States has placed high barriers on sugar imports because of the concentrated efforts of inefficient sugar producers based in the state of Florida. Ethnic lobbies will have a vested interest in promoting better relations with their country of origin (and, possibly, frostier relations with that country's longstanding adversaries).²⁰ Indian-American business associations, for example,

18. See, for example, Michael Getler, »Number, Location of U.S. Troops in South Korea Stir Concern,« *Washington Post*, May 24, 1975, pp. A13–A14.

19. Daniel Kono, »Optimal Obfuscation: Democracy and Trade Policy Transparency,« *American Political Science Review* 100 (August 2006): 369–84.

20. Exceptions include Cuban émigrés, who have a vested interest in denying any benefits to the Castro regime in Cuba.

lobbied for Congressional support of the bilateral civilian nuclear deal between the United States and India. Finally, non-governmental organizations – fuelled by religious or secular motives – command influence over policies that intersect their interests. Both conservative Christians and human rights groups, for example, have campaigned for the United States to be more proactive about the crisis in Darfur.

Consequently, for a small set of issues US foreign policy is unlikely to change dramatically, regardless of who wins the presidency in 2008. As it happens, some of these policies are also at the crux of transatlantic frictions. Agricultural firms, for example, can block deep cuts in farm subsidies through their congressional clout.²¹ This means they essentially hold veto power over any US effort to bring the Doha development round to a conclusion. Cuban émigrés based in Florida retain inordinate influence over American overtures to the Castro regime in Cuba.

One should be careful, however, not to exaggerate the power of these groups over the broader contours of American foreign policy. Consider, for example, recent claims that the »Israel Lobby« is almost entirely responsible for US foreign policy in the Greater Middle East, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq.²² The reality is altogether less dramatic. To be sure, groups such as AIPAC and Christian conservatives have affected American policy regarding the Israel/Palestine problem. Nevertheless, this argument vastly overstates the influence of a »lobby« that is much less cohesive than non-Americans believe. The Israel lobby has not prevented the United States from fashioning a strong alliance with Saudi Arabia, for example, nor has it blocked arms sales to friendly Arab governments,²³ or prevented President Bush from proposing a two-state solution to the Israel/Palestine problem.

It is politically unrewarding for presidential candidates to take on »entrenched« policies during the campaign – hence the status quo will remain unchanged on these issues for quite some time. The political dynamics of the 2008 presidential campaign, however, present another way in which other interest groups will exert their leverage over the candidates' foreign-policy proposals. To win their party's nomination, the leading Republi-

21. David Herszenhorn, »Farm Subsidies Seem Immune to an Overhaul,« *New York Times*, July 26, 2007.

22. John Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and u.s. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2007).

23. Rachel Bronson, *Thicker than Oil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

cans and Democrats need to satisfy their bases (that is the most politically mobilized individuals within their party organization, those who will vote – and cajole others to vote – in the primaries).

Satisfying the base is a time-honored primary election tradition. The 2008 campaign is unique, however, for two reasons. First, for obvious reasons, foreign policy is a prominent topic for voters. Second, in an unusual twist, foreign policy has also become one of the areas with the greatest degree of partisan divergence. For Republicans, this means appeasing the 30% of Americans who still support President Bush and approve of his policies in Iraq. As one Republican strategist said recently, »To go out and say you're against the president right now would be political suicide.«²⁴ For Democrats, this means appeasing the »netroots« – a networked group of online activists that are implacably opposed to President Bush and the war in Iraq.²⁵ A symbol of the power of the netroots is that in August 2007 all the Democratic presidential hopefuls skipped the moderate Democratic Leadership Council meeting to attend the second annual Kos convention, organized by Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, the founder of Daily Kos, the most popular weblog in America.

The effect these bases have can already be seen in the few foreign-policy disputes that have emerged in the presidential debates. In the early part of this year, activists demanded that John Edwards apologize for his 2002 vote authorizing President Bush to take military action against Iraq. He did. Hillary Clinton is thought to be vulnerable because she has refused to offer a similar apology for her vote.²⁶ Activists have criticized all three Democratic frontrunners – Edwards, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama – for *not* ruling out the use of force against Iran. The legacy of Iraq has led to a strong netroots aversion to anything that remotely resembles saber-rattling regarding foreign-policy issues. This has caused the Democratic candidates to issue repeated calls for a near-complete withdrawal from Iraq, as well as to adopt a more dovish line towards a variety of the world's trouble spots.

24. Matt Bai, »The Crusader,« *New York Times Magazine*, September 9, 2007, p. 118.

25. On the netroots, see Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, *Crashing the Gate: Netroots, Grassroots and the Rise of People-Powered Politics* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2006); Henry Farrell, »Bloggers and Parties,« *The Boston Review* 31 (September/October 2006); Jonathan Chait, »The Left's New Machine,« *The New Republic*, May 7, 2007; Matt Bai, *The Argument* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

26. Michael Crowley, »Hillary's War,« *The New Republic*, April 2, 2007.

The debate on the Republican side has taken on a similar dynamic: as a way for each candidate to satisfy the base. The leading candidates all appear to be outbidding each other in their resoluteness in »staying the course« in the war on terror. All three of the frontrunners – Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, and John McCain – took pains during the first part of the year to endorse the »surge« in Iraq. In a debate in May, Romney asserted: »Some people have said we ought to close Guantanamo; my view is that we ought to double Guantanamo.«²⁷ Giuliani has made similar hardline statements. For obvious political reasons, the top-tier candidates have not gone out of their way to discuss Iraq – but they have, to date, rejected any kind of withdrawal.

This need to satisfy the base on foreign-policy issues will likely cause both the nominees to move further away from the center than they originally planned. Candidates can and do shift back towards the center once they have earned their party's nomination. But they can move back and forth only so often before being perceived as lacking principles.

The Marketplace of Ideas

The mass public and interest groups affect US foreign policy, but ideas matter as well. To be precise, the source of these ideas – think tanks and universities – matter more than one might believe at first glance. One recent study demonstrated that four elite groups in particular have the strongest effect on the attitudes of policymakers: the media, business, think tanks and other foreign-policy organizations, and educators.²⁸ These groups represent the »foreign policy establishment« that exists within the United States.²⁹ They comprise the universe of pundits that lead the discourse on mainstream media outlets. Their opinions hold significant sway.

On several issues, the rough consensus among policy elites does not match the rough consensus of the mass public on US foreign policy. Surveys over the past decade indicate that the public elites are more liberal

27. Doyle McManus, »Democrats and Republicans Show Foreign Policy Chasm,« *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2007.

28. Lawrence Jacobs and Benjamin Page, »Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?,« *American Political Science Review* 99 (February), p. 113.

29. Jacobs and Page, »The Media and the Foreign Policy Establishment,« paper presented at the Midwestern Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2004.

internationalist than the mass public.³⁰ Elites adopted more positive attitudes towards multilateralism and democratic peace than the mass public.³¹ Elites prefer spending larger amounts on foreign aid than the mass public. The mass public is far more likely to view the world through a »relative gains« prism than elites. After the end of the Cold War, the public elites were far more concerned about Russia's transition to democracy than the American public; the mass public was more concerned about Japan's economic ascent and the threat of international terrorism. On the use of force, the mass public is more willing to use military statecraft to intervene in the Western hemisphere, combat illegal drugs, and prevent terrorism than the public elites. The public elites are more willing to use force to protect vital allies or for humanitarian reasons.

If the failure of neo-conservatism has left any legacy among think tanks and the academy, it has been a greater reluctance to use force. This is evidenced in two recent surveys. The Center for American Progress has surveyed leading foreign-policy experts three times since July 2006.³² Over the course of the past year, this group of experts – liberal, moderate, and conservative – have become increasingly pessimistic about the global war on terror, the »surge« strategy in Iraq, and the utility of using force to deal with Iran. A survey of academic international relations specialists reveals similar pessimism among professors.³³

Dissatisfaction, even among elites, with the current grand strategy does not guarantee that there will be a change of tack. As Jeffrey Legro has pointed out, a lot is required for a grand strategy to be revamped.³⁴ There needs to be a viable alternative around which others can rally, one that can generate politically attractive solutions to current problems. The policy malaise of the past few years has led to a surfeit of ideas about how

30. Page and Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect*.

31. Olé Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, revised edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 259; Richard Herrmann and Jonathan Keller, »Beliefs, Values, and Strategic Choice,« *Journal of Politics* 66 (May 2004): 557–80.

32. Center for American Progress, »The Terrorism Index,« *Foreign Policy* 162 (September/October 2007): 60–67. In the interest of full disclosure, I was one of the surveyed »experts.«

33. Michael Tierney et al., »Inside the Ivory Tower,« *Foreign Policy* 159 (March/April): 62–69.

34. Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking The World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

to change America's foreign policy. Many of these »idea entrepreneurs« are trying to capture the ears of presidential hopefuls – and in some cases they have succeeded.

Despair about the status quo has led to a resurgence of realist policy proposals. These feed off a nostalgia for the days of George Kennan and the containment strategy that served the United States so well during the Cold War. In his classic 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article »The Sources of Soviet Conduct,« Kennan concluded:

»Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence.«³⁵

In applying this doctrine, Kennan took pains to caution against »threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward ›toughness.« Kennan's doctrine seems to be measured, prudent, and – most importantly – successful. In other words, the containment strategy seems to be everything that neo-conservatism is not.

Ian Shapiro advocates adopting Kennan's approach to combating terrorism.³⁶ »The idea behind containment,« according to Shapiro, »is to refuse to be bullied, while at the same time declining to become a bully.« He therefore rejects the rhetoric of »Islamofascism« – that is, lumping together disparate strands of Islamic extremism. Like Kennan, Shapiro advocates the promotion of fissures between Islamic groups. He also pushes for substituting economic, political, and law-enforcement tools for the use of force. States that offer assistance to terrorists should be contained – but not invaded.

The *realpolitik* position can be seen best in Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman's articulation of »ethical realism.«³⁷ Coming from different sides of the political spectrum, Lieven and Hulsman want American foreign policy to return to the realist tenets of Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, and George Kennan. Ethical realists do not disdain democracy or human rights, but believe that the US can promote these goals best by example rather than by advocacy. Lieven and Hulsman blast both neo-

35. George Kennan, »The Sources of Soviet Conduct,« *Foreign Affairs* 26 (July 1947).

36. Ian Shapiro, *Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy against Global Terror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

37. Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman, *Ethical Realism* (New York: Pantheon, 2006).

conservatives and »liberal hawks« for being too optimistic about the spread of Western values to non-Western parts of the globe. If Iraq has taught us anything, they argue, it should be that American policymakers could do with a higher dose of humility.

Ethical realism does not propose a crude isolationism, however. Rather, Lieven and Hulsman promote a »Great Capitalist Peace.« This combines the deepening of global markets with a great power concert designed to assuage the security fears of states such as China, Russia, and India. This requires a conscious retrenchment of American power in places that irritate the other great powers, such as Ukraine or Taiwan. In return, Lieven and Hulsman argue, economic interdependence will contribute greatly to peace: »no major state elite has an interest in the kind of international crisis that would pull their own economic house down around their ears.«

While some strategists propose out-and-out realism, many are seeking the right combination of liberal ideas and realist cautions. Francis Fukuyama proposes a policy of »realistic Wilsonianism.«³⁸ The »Wilsonian« in Fukuyama defends a central neo-conservative insight: for there to be a stable world order, what happens *inside* states matters just as much as relations *between* countries. The United States should therefore continue to promote the spread of economic, political, and social development across the globe by maintaining its support of the spread of democracy, human rights, and free markets. The realist in Fukuyama, however, recognizes that outsiders have little ability to affect internal change in other societies. The best channel for American power, Fukuyama advises, »is not through the exercise of military power but through the ability of the United States to shape international institutions.« This strategy has the potential to provide American power with the velvet glove of institutional legitimacy.

The standard argument against this kind of strategy has been that international institutions constrain the United States more than they enable action. Fukuyama's response to this is to urge the US to practice »multilateralism« – the promotion of »a large number of overlapping and sometimes competing institutions.« If the United Nations blocks an American-backed policy, then the US can act through NATO; if the IMF proves too sclerotic to handle a problem, there's always the Bank for In-

38. Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

ternational Settlements. This ability to forum-shop would potentially allow the US to transform its current power into greater legitimacy.

Amitai Etzioni makes a similar argument in *Security First*.³⁹ As the book's title suggests, Etzioni criticizes the Bush administration for prioritizing democratization over providing security. For Etzioni, security is a necessary condition for achieving any other policy goal. Based on this first principle, he argues that most rogue states should be handled with a mixture of providing security guarantees and firm deterrence. Etzioni asserts that extremism thrives in an anarchic environment. Therefore, the United States should focus its hard and soft power resources on failed or failing states. Like Fukuyama, Etzioni urges that more efforts be focused on state-building.

In a July 2006 New York Times article, Robert Wright, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, offered a slightly different approach to reconcile »the humanitarian aims of idealists with the powerful logic of realists.«⁴⁰ Labeling his approach »progressive realism,« Wright agrees with Fukuyama that »the classic realist indifference to the interiors of nations is untenable.« He also agrees with Fukuyama that the spread of free markets is an unambiguously good thing – over time, the growth of trade and the spread of the Internet will create an inexorable movement towards liberal democracy. To support this movement, Wright advocates a slight tweak of current institutions – for example, he wants the World Trade Organization to have the authority to enforce labor and environmental standards. More so than Fukuyama, Wright stresses that the United States needs to adhere to the rules it proposes for others: »The national interest can be served by constraints on America's behavior when they constrain other nations as well.«

Anne-Marie Slaughter and G. John Ikenberry go even further in stressing the importance of the rule of law as a means of advancing the national interest.⁴¹ Ikenberry and Slaughter were the principal organizers of the Princeton Project on National Security, a multi-year attempt to foster a »Kennan by committee,« involving hundreds of foreign policy analysts.⁴²

39. Amitai Etzioni, *Security First* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

40. Robert Wright, »An American Foreign Policy that Both Realists and Idealists Should Fall in Love With,« New York Times, July 16, 2006.

41. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law* (Princeton: Princeton Project on National Security, 2006).

42. This includes most authors mentioned in this section, as well as myself.

In their final report, Ikenberry and Slaughter make a point that others have not: in many respects Kennan had it easy; the United States faced only one obvious threat when he wrote the Long Telegram, the Soviet Union. In contrast, the Princeton Project co-directors point out that »Americans need to recognize that ours is a world lacking a single organizing principle for foreign policy like anti-fascism or anti-communism. We face many present dangers, several long-term challenges, and countless opportunities.« They argue that the multiplicity of threats calls for a multiplicity of responses. This requires a greater reliance on international law and international institutions to channel and potentially augment US power and influence at the global level, as well as advocacy of the continued, peaceful promotion of PARS – popular, accountable and rights-regarding governments.

These proposed strategies all contain a mixture of realist and liberal approaches to foreign policy. Both Shapiro and Lieven and Hulsman urge the United States explicitly to adopt a realist posture vis-à-vis the rest of the world. The other authors – Fukuyama, Wright, Etzioni, and Ikenberry and Slaughter – wish to preserve the liberal internationalist ideas that lie at the core of neo-conservatism. Intriguingly, all these proposed alternatives bode well for European–American relations. The realists want the United States to scale back its military posture in the world – something that has been a key irritant of the transatlantic relationship. The liberals, on the other hand, want the United States to act in a more multilateral manner while advancing its liberal ideals. Logically, for any multilateral agenda to succeed these authors will have to encourage close cooperation with the Europeans.

The Candidates

During the Cold War and the decade that followed it, Democrats were traditionally associated with liberal internationalism and Republicans with realism. The Bush presidency and its legacy, however, have jumbled those alignments. Republicans are caught in a bind: they cannot be too closely associated with Bush's foreign policy or they will suffer the same fate as John McCain. At the same time, however, their need to conform to their base prevents them from completely repudiating Bush. This means they must embrace the values that Bush has emphasized. Given the state of US public opinion, one would expect the Democratic candidates

to embrace the realist opposition to Bush's foreign policy. They face their own constraints, however. Democrats are understandably reluctant to repudiate the liberal internationalist ideas that have been a cornerstone of their foreign-policy legacy for the last half-century. A further issue is that presidential candidates in the United States need to run on more than an isolationist »America, come home« platform. They also need to articulate a positive agenda that resonates with American values. For Democrats, that means stressing the promotion of liberal internationalist values.

The effect of this is to blur some of the foreign-policy differences between the Republican and Democratic frontrunners. Mitt Romney, for example, refers positively to the Princeton Project's final report that emphasizes the significance of multilateral institutions. Even the most dovish Democratic top-tier candidates propose boosting military resources and capabilities: Hillary Clinton has said, »Our foreign policy must blend both idealism and realism in the service of American interests.« She approvingly cited Lieven and Hulsman's *Ethical Realism*.

There is an easy way to better understand the areas of agreement and disagreement between the candidates. Four of the leading contenders have recently contributed essays to *Foreign Affairs*, the most widely read journal of international affairs in the United States. Despite their obvious ideological differences, John Edwards, Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and Rudy Giuliani have some important similarities regarding their foreign-policy proposals.⁴³ Hillary Clinton, the leading Democratic candidate, gave a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in late 2006 that sketched out her foreign-policy vision.⁴⁴ On several issues, the five candidates make similar-sounding pronouncements.

On *energy security*, for example, Obama, Edwards, Romney, and Clinton make very similar sounding proposals. Obama proposes to »finally free America of its dependence on foreign oil – by using energy more efficiently in our cars, factories, and homes, relying more on renew-

43. Barack Obama, »Renewing American Leadership,« *Foreign Affairs* 86 (July/August 2007): 2–16; Mitt Romney, »Rising to a New Generation of Global Challenges,« *Foreign Affairs* 86 (July/August 2007): 17–33; John Edwards, »Reengaging with the World,« *Foreign Affairs* 86 (September/October 2007): 19–37; Rudolph Giuliani, »Towards a Realistic Peace,« *Foreign Affairs* 86 (September/October 2007): 2–18.

44. <http://www.hillaryclinton.com/news/speech/view/?id=1233>, accessed September 2007. Clinton will likely be articulating her foreign-policy strategy in the November/December issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

able sources of electricity, and harnessing the potential of biofuels.« If elected, Edwards plans to create a New Energy Economy Fund (funded by the sale of carbon emission permits) that would double the Department of Energy's budget for efficiency and renewable energy.⁴⁵ Romney also promotes energy independence through the diversification of energy supplies. He proposes, »a bold, far-reaching research initiative – an energy revolution – that will be our generation's equivalent of the Manhattan Project or the mission to the moon. It will be a mission to create new, economical sources of clean energy and clean ways to use the sources we have now.«

Hillary Clinton has similarly proposed an »Apollo Project-like program dedicated to achieving energy independence.« This includes introducing her plan for a Strategic Energy Fund that would provide \$50 billion for energy conservation, research, and development.

On *peace-building and state-building*, the candidates have also made very similar pronouncements. All the candidates want to provide greater resources to the military. Obama proposes expanding US ground forces by adding 65,000 soldiers to the army and 27,000 marines. Romney calls for spending at least 4 % of GDP on national defense; this would include adding at least 100,000 troops, as well as additional investments in equipment, armaments, weapons systems, and strategic defense. Giuliani proposes the creation of at least 10 new combat brigades for the army. Edwards wants to double the budget for military recruitment.

Almost all the candidates also want to expand American capabilities on the civilian side of this equation. Edwards proposes the creation of a »Marshall Corps,« which would consist of »10,000 civilian experts who could be deployed abroad to serve in reconstruction, stabilization, and humanitarian missions.« Giuliani makes a similar proposal for a »Stabilization and Reconstruction Corps;« in Giuliani's vision, this agency would consist of both military and civilian reservists. Romney wants to reorganize America's civilian capabilities across the globe to mirror the military's regional theaters of operation: for each region, one civilian leader would have authority over and responsibility for all the relevant agencies and departments. Clinton, Obama, and Edwards propose scaling up foreign aid expenditures on disease prevention and primary education. One telling omission in all these pronouncements, however, has been discussion

45. <http://johnedwards.com/issues/energy/new-energy-economy>, accessed Sept. 2007.

of how these expanded capabilities would mesh with existing state-building capacities at the international and European levels.

With regard to *multilateralism*, many of the candidates express enthusiasm for creating new international bodies or reforming old ones. Obama writes that he will »work to forge a more effective framework in Asia that goes beyond bilateral agreements, occasional summits, and ad hoc arrangements, such as the six-party talks on North Korea.« In his Foreign Affairs essay, Edwards proposes reforming the G-8 to »continue integrating rising powers into a peaceful international system by convincing them that they can both benefit from and contribute to the system's strength.« In September, Edwards followed up by proposing a »Counterterrorism and Intelligence Treaty Organization« that would share financial, police, customs, and immigration intelligence.⁴⁶ Romney praises multilateral institutions as well, and wants to expand their reach, quoting approvingly from the Princeton Project on National Security:

»The history of Europe since 1945 tells us that institutions can play a constructive role in building a framework for cooperation, channeling nationalist sentiments in a positive direction, and fostering economic development and liberalization. Yet the Middle East is one of the least institutionalized regions in the world«.

Giuliani wants to transform NATO into a global organization: »We should open the organization's membership to any state that meets basic standards of good governance, military readiness, and global responsibility, regardless of its location.«⁴⁷ Clinton wants to reinvigorate the global nonproliferation regime.

To be sure, the leading candidates do not hold undifferentiated opinions on issues of foreign policy. There are key differences between the Democrats and Republicans, and among the Democratic contenders as

46. <http://johnedwards.com/news/speeches/a-new-strategy-against-terrorism/>, accessed September 2007.

47. Alone among the major contenders, Giuliani has devoted some attention to the United Nations in his foreign-policy musings. That attention is not positive, however: »[W]e need to look realistically at America's relationship with the United Nations. The organization can be useful for some humanitarian and peacekeeping functions, but we should not expect much more of it. The UN has proved irrelevant to the resolution of almost every major dispute of the last 50 years. Worse, it has failed to combat terrorism and human rights abuses. It has not lived up to the great hopes that inspired its creation. Too often, it has been weak, indecisive, and outright corrupt.«

well. The major Republican candidates all identify radical jihadism as the key problem in the Middle East and link the US presence in Iraq with combating that ideology. None of the Republicans propose any draw-down of US troops in the region. They argue that a withdrawal would merely embolden terrorist groups. Each of the top-tier GOP candidates has retained prominent neo-conservative advisors. The Democrats take a different view: Obama, Edwards, and Clinton all believe that the conflict in Iraq has undercut the global war on terror. To varying degrees, they all propose a significant drawdown of US forces in the region. Obama goes further, arguing that the primary problem in the Middle East is the failure to solve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

A separate divide exists between Hillary Clinton and the other top-tier Democratic challengers. This gulf exists on domestic policies but includes foreign policy as well.⁴⁸ She has adopted a more hawkish position on the use of American power and military force. Hillary urged her husband to commence the bombing campaign in Kosovo in 1999.⁴⁹ The distribution of foreign-policy advisors among the top-tier candidates is also revealing. The principal Clinton advisors – Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke, and Sandy Berger – were among the most hawkish members of Bill Clinton’s foreign-policy team. The more dovish members of that team – Anthony Lake and Susan Rice – have gravitated towards Obama.⁵⁰ In contrast to Edwards, Clinton has refused to apologize for her October 2002 vote in favor of using force in Iraq. She criticized Barack Obama’s statement in a debate that he would negotiate with the leaders of rogue states. Obama responded by accusing Clinton of adopting a »Bush–Cheney lite« position on the matter.

It is likely that Clinton’s experience in the executive branch of her husband’s administration has caused her to be more jaundiced in her view of multilateralism – and less wary of the role of force in world politics. This summer she has been less critical of the »surge« strategy than the other candidates, arguing that there has been progress in some provinces. In the spring, she told *The New Republic* that »the use of diplomacy backed

48. Ryan Lizza, »The Legacy Problem,« *The New Yorker*, September 17, 2007.

49. Gail Sheehy, *Hillary’s Choice* (New York: Random House, 1999).

50. Michael Hirsch, »No Time to Go Wobbly, Barack,« *Washington Monthly*, April 2007. Accessed at <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0704.hirsh.html>, September 2007; Hirsch, »Battle for the Best and the Brightest,« *Newsweek.com*, September 6, 2007, accessed at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20628439/site/newsweek/page/0/>, September 2007.

up by the threat of force—that is a credible position for America to take in the world ... [there are] those in the Congress who thought that the United States should never even threaten force—or certainly take force—in the absence of U.N. Security Council approval. Well, I had seen during the Clinton administration that sometimes, that's not even possible. Sometimes, it's not even possible for the president to get congressional approval to pursue vital national security interests.«⁵¹

There is a caveat to this analysis of candidates' foreign-policy positions: what presidential candidates say about foreign policy often differs from the foreign policy they implement while in office. Compare the Bush administration's foreign policy with the positions that Condoleezza Rice and Robert Zoellick advocated in Foreign Affairs in 1999—or Bush's own vow to pursue a »humble« foreign policy during a 2000 presidential debate.⁵² As several commentators have observed, Bill Clinton's foreign-policy vision in 1992 looked very different from what he espoused in 2000.⁵³ During a presidential campaign season, talk of foreign policy is cheap.

American Foreign Policy in 2009

Given the number of variables involved, predicting the future of American foreign policy is more art than science. US foreign policy from 2009 on depends crucially on who is elected president, and whether any more shocks to the system occur, such as a sequel to the September 11 attacks. The latter is impossible to predict, the former only somewhat less so. At the time of writing, Hillary Clinton is the Democratic frontrunner. The situation in Iraq and the unsteady nature of the US economy create a favorable environment for a Democrat to win the White House. Regardless of the presidential election, the Democrats are likely to cement their majorities in both houses of Congress.

From a European perspective, there are reasons to be optimistic. The current unpopularity of neo-conservatism and the invasion of Iraq, com-

51. Crowley, »Hillary's War.«

52. Condoleezza Rice, »Promoting the National Interest,« *Foreign Affairs* 79 (January/February 2000); Robert Zoellick, »A Republican Foreign Policy,« *Foreign Affairs* 79 (January/February 2000).

53. David Halberstan, *War in a Time of Peace* (New York: Scribner's, 2001).

bined with a Democratic Congress, virtually guarantee that Bush's successor will scale down the use of military force after taking office. The next president is more likely to act in a multilateral manner to tackle humanitarian, peacekeeping, or energy crises. There will be, in all likelihood, an effort to reach out to European leaders as a symbolic break from the Bush administration's occasionally brusque diplomatic style. For Washington policymakers, as well as the mainstream media, Europe remains the barometer by which American internationalism is measured. If Europe is seen as cooperating with the United States, then the media views US foreign policy as multilateral. Regardless of who becomes president, there will likely be an effort to reach out to Europe – in the form of a transatlantic marketplace, or perhaps a reinvigoration of NATO.

There are also reasons for Europeans to be realistic in their expectations of the future of American foreign policy. First, some policies will persist regardless of who becomes president. The power of material and ethnic interest groups over small sectors of US foreign policy cannot be denied. These interest groups are unlikely to effect changes in the grand strategy. Nevertheless, their influence over Congress means that the status quo will persist on some issues: agricultural subsidies, relations with Cuba, relations with Israel, and genetically modified foods. Although the next president might practice a more accommodating style of governance on these issues, this will not necessarily lead to genuine policy flexibility.

Second, the pre-emption doctrine will not disappear – it will simply not be discussed in an equally boisterous manner in public. The pre-emptive option has been a part of US national security strategies and doctrines since the days of Teddy Roosevelt. FDR, Cold War presidents, and Bill Clinton all endorsed pre-emptive attacks as a last resort.⁵⁴ The Bush administration differed not so much in its strategy as in its rhetoric – and the application of this rhetoric to Iraq. It is likely that the next administration will not proudly trumpet its right to act in a pre-emptive manner. This does not mean that this option would be taken off the table. Barack Obama might be the most dovish top-tier candidate, but he has said publicly that he would send special forces into Pakistan to combat Al Qaeda. This shows that no viable presidential candidate will rule out force as an option when vital American interests are threatened.

54. Melvyn Leffler, »9/11 and American Foreign Policy,« *Diplomatic History* 29 (June 2005): 395–413.

Finally, the next president's enthusiasm for acting multilaterally does not necessarily mean that the US version of multilateralism will correspond to European expectations. As noted above, Americans view multilateral institutions through a utilitarian lens. For a variety of reasons, Americans view prominent international institutions – ranging from the WTO to the IAEA – as increasingly sclerotic. This does not mean that the next American president will reject multilateralism per se, but it does mean that American policymakers might choose to sidestep pre-existing institutions by creating new ones. Democratic policy analysts have proposed a »Concert of Democracies« to assist in global governance if the United Nations system falters.⁵⁵ There have also been official discussions about supplanting the G-7 with a new grouping that reflects shifts in the global economy. The creation of new organizations will not necessarily favor European interests. Some of these new multilateral institutions could offer European countries a less important seat at the table than they have in either the IMF or the UN Security Council. The proliferation of multilateral institutions could allow the United States to engage in the »multi-multilateralism« that Fukuyama emphasized.

For Europe, American foreign policy in 2009 will clearly be an improvement on its current incarnation. Regardless of who wins the presidential election, there will likely be a reaching out to Europe as a means of demonstrating a decisive shift from the Bush administration's diplomatic style. This does not mean, however, that the major irritants to the transatlantic relationship will disappear. On several issues, such as GMOs or the Boeing–Airbus dispute, the status quo will persist. On deeper questions, such as the use of force and the use of multilateralism, American foreign policy will shift, but not as far as Europeans would like. When George W. Bush leaves office, neo-conservatism will go with him. This does not mean, however, that Europeans will altogether agree with the foreign policy that replaces it.

55. Ivo Daalder and James Lindsey, »Democracies of the World, Unite!«, *The American Interest* 2 (January/February 2007): 34–44; Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law*; Ivo Daalder and Robert Kagan, »The Next Intervention,« *Washington Post*, August 6, 2007.