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## **BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*According to polling commissioned by the Lowy Institute, twice as many Australians think that US foreign policy is on the wrong track as think it is on the right track. Many observers argue that the direction of American policy will vary greatly depending on the outcome of the presidential election. Certainly, there are significant differences in style and substance between the two candidates, George W. Bush and John F. Kerry. However the similarities are as striking as the differences. External challenges, in particular the Iraq war and the war against terrorism, and internal pressures have combined to produce something of a convergence between the outlooks of foreign policy makers in both parties. In the event of a Bush victory, the failure of its foreign policy adventurism in the first term would probably make for a more centrist policy in the second term. In the event of a Kerry victory, the realities of the international system and the probable Republican control of the Senate would do the same. Whomever is elected, America is likely to pursue an assertive foreign policy involving the use of military force; there will be less gleeful unilateralism and steroid-fuelled pre-emption than we have seen in the past four years, but it will still be a world away from the kind of strategy many observers are anticipating. From Australia's perspective, the fundamentals of our alliance with the US will ensure that it endures regardless of the result on 2 November. However the temperature of the relationship would probably be affected by a Kerry win. Given the task the senator has set himself of strengthening links with allied capitals, the relationship with Canberra would likely be less of a priority for him than for President Bush. On the other hand, the election of a new face in Washington would make other aspects of Australia's diplomatic life easier.*

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**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO****George Bush and John Kerry**

At first glance, the two contenders for the office of president of the United States in 2004, President George W. Bush and Senator John F. Kerry, could hardly be more different.

Both were born into privilege but were affected by it in different ways. Bush, the son of a president, wore his lineage lightly; in fact for many years he seemingly did everything possible, including alcohol and illegal drugs, to exclude himself from candidacy for high office. Kerry saw his destiny from a young age and revealed it to others: fellow students used to play a kazoo version of 'Hail to the Chief' when he entered the room.

As a young man, Bush was a towel-snapping frat boy; Kerry was an earnest debater and student politician. Bush avoided service in Vietnam; Kerry volunteered for Vietnam, and with an eye to the future, perhaps, recorded his experiences on film. Bush ran from his New England background and remade himself as a Texan; Kerry emphasised his Boston accent and his distinctive initials and dated Jacqui Kennedy's half-sister.

Bush is basically incurious about the rest of the world and had travelled overseas only occasionally before his election in 2000. Kerry attended boarding school in Switzerland and speaks three foreign languages; his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, born in Mozambique to Portuguese parents, speaks four. International affairs do not comprise Bush's favourite area of knowledge; he famously flunked a journalist's pop quiz on the subject and once confused the name of the then prime minister of Canada, Jean *Chrétien*, with *poutine*, a popular Quebecois fast food consisting of chips, gravy and cheese curd. Kerry, on the other hand, made his

name in Washington appearing before, and then on, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In politics, Bush was a late bloomer, Kerry a lifer. Bush is known for taking quick decisions; Kerry takes counsel from all directions before moving. Bush comes across as intuitive and straightforward; Kerry presents as intelligent and elusive. When they look at issues, Bush sees their simplicity and Kerry sees – one might say he revels in – their complexity.

The two men are, in other words, a study in contrasts. Throughout the election season, they have claimed to offer radically different visions of governance, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. Commentators in Australia and abroad have tended to take them at their word.

This Issues Brief seeks to analyse those claims and search for clues to the direction of US foreign policy in coming years. It is not a straightforward exercise. The Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Nils Bohr, observed that "prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future." As an aid to prediction, the Brief draws on interviews conducted with leading American commentators and policy makers from both the Republican and Democratic camps. The thesis of the paper is that the similarities between the foreign policy programs of the two candidates are as striking as the differences.

That is not to say they are identical, of course. The two policies differ in both substance and style. However, external threats and internal pressures have combined to produce a convergence between the outlooks of foreign policy specialists in both parties. Academic writers tend to underestimate the role of individuals in international relations, but politicians and commentators tend to overestimate it.<sup>1</sup> The truth is that whomever is elected, America is likely to pursue an assertive foreign policy involving

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

the use of military force; there will be less gleeful unilateralism and steroid-fuelled pre-emption than we have seen in the past four years, but it will still be a world away from the kind of strategy many are anticipating. The argument here is not that the foreign policies of a President Kerry would mirror those of the current Bush Administration; rather, that the differences between the policies of a Kerry Administration and the *next* Bush Administration would be less than is commonly supposed.

Borrowing from a popular self-help book, the analyst Robert Kagan memorably wrote that "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus." His point was that unlike some parts of the developed world, the US relies on military might rather than international rules in order to maintain its security and promote a liberal order. According to international polling, many people around the world agree with Kagan, at least in regarding President Bush as some kind of alien. But the world should understand that, although there are differences between the two presidential candidates, John Kerry is also, in these terms, a Martian.<sup>2</sup>

**Differences in policy**

The American election campaign is being fought, to an unusual extent, on the battleground of foreign policy. The last time a President Bush faced re-election, for example, a sign on the wall of his challenger's Little Rock war room declared: "It's the economy, stupid." By contrast, the Democratic Convention in Boston in July this year was dominated by speeches about George W. Bush's international, not his domestic, program. Foreign policy issues are energising the bases of both parties, clogging the op-ed columns of newspapers, and occupying the thoughts of voters. Americans' views on the constellation of issues which relate to their

country's role in the world, including the Iraq war, terrorism and homeland security, will determine who is the next president of the United States.

There has been much *sturm und drang* about the starkness of the foreign policy choice on offer on 2 November. And in many ways the choice is clear.

President Bush has pursued an audacious grand strategy. It has borne little resemblance to his comments during the 2000 election campaign, when he and his surrogates called for a less interventionist foreign policy, one that stayed clear of nation-building in particular.<sup>3</sup> Since then, America has moved away from the tradition, established by Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, of projecting influence through multilateral institutions and allied nations. Roosevelt and Truman established the institutions of global order such as the United Nations, World Bank, IMF and the GATT, and embedded US interests in those institutions. In John Lewis Gaddis's phrase, they established American hegemony by consent.<sup>4</sup>

The Bush Administration's commitment to the United Nations, on the other hand, has been tactical rather than strategic. In contrast to his predecessors, the president has been reluctant to invest real effort in the international organisation, and even then he has only done so when a concrete short-term gain seemed likely. He has also proved to be generally hostile to formal multilateral agreements, opposing US participation in the Kyoto Protocol, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty and the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court. President Bush has been down on diplomacy, noting once: "Arms and missiles are not stopped by stiff notes of condemnation."<sup>5</sup>

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

The Administration's policies have featured the inter-related concepts of unilateralism, pre-emption and regime change through the use of force. Diplomatic historians such as Gaddis and Melvyn Leffler point out that none of these ideas is unprecedented in the history of American foreign relations. In relation to pre-emptive attacks, for example, FDR himself said that 'when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him.' But in two respects, George Bush's approach has been new. First, whilst pre-emption has always been an *option of last resort* for US governments, it was promoted, in the Administration's National Security Strategy of September 2002, to the rank of *official doctrine*. Furthermore, although pre-emption, unilateralism and the willingness to use military force to achieve regime change have featured in US international policy in the past, the coincidence of all three in the Bush presidency is probably unique.<sup>6</sup>

The Bush approach has been tested in the Iraq war and found wanting. The initial military operation was remarkably successful. However, the occupation is in serious trouble, caused in part by several critical coalition errors and helped along by the revelation that the Administration's *casus belli* were heroically flawed. Not only is Iraq not a Switzerland-on-the-Tigris, it is violent, chaotic and dangerous. In retrospect, the United States either underestimated the value of international assistance in Iraq, or miscalculated the price that would be demanded for that assistance. Probably it did both. These failures have significantly increased the costs of the Iraq operation, and the risks associated with it. The means chosen by President Bush in the first few years of his presidency have seriously undermined his ends – as measured not only in the killing zones of Fallujah and Sadr City but in public opinion in Toronto, Madrid, Tokyo and Sydney.

John Kerry's foreign policy worldview is less obvious than George Bush's. One interviewee noted that despite the senator's many years of service on the Foreign Relations Committee, there is no 'Kerry doctrine.' He achieved the rare *quinella*, for example, of voting against the Gulf War of 1991 and for the Iraq War of 2003. Various theories have arisen about Kerry's approach to strategic matters. Many Republicans claim (and some Europeans hope) that Kerry would be a mushy multilateralist: hence the practice of the combative Republican House majority leader and former pest exterminator, Congressman Tom DeLay, of introducing his speeches with: "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen – or as John Kerry would say, *bonjour*." On the other hand, Democrats are arguing that a Kerry foreign policy would resemble that of President Bill Clinton or, alternatively, the conservative realist approach of the administration led by George H.W. Bush.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that Kerry's strategic compass is difficult to read has led Republicans to caricature him as a flip-flopper. In fact, there are a number of areas in which Kerry has opened up blue water between his opponent and himself. On the great issue of the day, Iraq, Kerry has hardened his position as the campaign has progressed; he now calls the war a "colossal error of judgment" and a "profound diversion" from the war on terrorism.<sup>8</sup> His campaign has also pointed to several conceptual differences between its posture and the White House stance. The first is Kerry's optimism on the subjects of diplomacy, allies and international organisations. The Democrat has vowed to "restore diplomacy as a tool of the strong", though he is careful to say it will be "diplomacy... backed by undoubted military might." He has promised to visit the United Nations and the capitals of traditional American allies in his first one hundred days in office "to affirm that the USA has rejoined the community of nations." The

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

UN will be “a full partner not an obstruction to get by.” Allies will be given more consideration by a Kerry White House – but more will be expected from them as well. As Samuel Berger, former national security adviser to President Clinton and until recently a leading player in the Kerry foreign policy shop put it: “the Bush Administration’s unilateralist approach has let our allies off the hook: it has given them an opportunity to shirk... global responsibilities.”<sup>9</sup>

The second point is that Kerry appears less gung-ho than President Bush regarding the use of military force, especially in pre-emptive form. In his convention speech, the senator said he will bring back the tradition that “the United States of America never goes to war because we want to, we only go to war because we have to.” After alluding to his service in Vietnam, he noted that “before you go to battle, you have to be able to look a parent in the eye and truthfully say: ‘I tried everything possible to avoid sending your son or daughter into harm’s way.’” In the first presidential debate in Coral Gables, Florida, Kerry argued that no president would cede “the right to pre-empt in any way necessary to protect the USA.” However he also claimed that pre-emptive action must pass “the global test where your countrymen understand fully why you’re doing what you’re doing, and you can prove to the world that you did it for legitimate reasons.”<sup>10</sup>

Kerry also seems to be chary of the Wilsonian view that America should use its influence to propagate its own values, in particular democracy. He told the *New York Times*: “You can’t impose [democracy] on people. You have to bring them to it. You have to invite them to it.” In this respect, he is his father’s son. Richard J. Kerry was a career foreign service officer who served in Washington, Berlin and Oslo. He wrote a book called *The Star-Spangled Mirror* in

which he critiqued the Americans’ desire to impose its internal political structure on other countries: “Our most flattering beliefs about our own society are at the very heart of our world view: a world seen in a mirror.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, Kerry Senior’s book is a polemic against exactly the kind of policies espoused by the neoconservatives in key positions in the Bush Administration. If John Kerry imbibed these views at the dining table, they were reinforced in Vietnam, and would probably influence him in the White House.

A final conceptual difference between the two camps concerns their views on the chief actors on the world stage. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in light of their Cold War background, most of the current Administration’s foreign policy makers look at the world from a state-centric position. This was evident in the fact that George Bush and Condoleezza Rice identified the key issue in the 2000 campaign as being relations between the great powers. It also helps explain the Administration’s behaviour in 2001-2002 when, having been attacked by Al-Qaeda, a non-state terrorist group, it set about displacing a state regime that had nothing to do with the attack. The link between terrorist groups and state sponsors of terrorism became, in the words of Pentagon official Douglas Feith, the “principal strategic thought underlying our strategy in the war on terrorism.” Democratic foreign policy thinkers, by contrast, tend to accord more strategic weight to non-state actors and non-traditional security threats, and in office would likely invest more resources in meeting these threats, not only through military means but through enhanced law enforcement cooperation and public diplomacy. Kerry himself has some experience in this area, through Senate work he led regarding money laundering by arms dealers, criminals and terrorists.<sup>12</sup>

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO****Similarities in policy**

Plainly, then, there are relevant and important foreign affairs distinctions between the two candidates. They are very different men and those differences would inform the Administrations they led. However, the similarities between the policies they would implement are as striking as the differences, for four reasons.

First, regardless of who takes the oath of office on 20 January next year, the twin challenges of the war against terrorism and the war in Iraq will condition and help determine US strategy. As Gideon Rose of *Foreign Affairs* puts it, choices are critical in foreign policy, but so are the constraints within which choices are made. The 9/11 attacks changed the foreign policy atmospherics within the United States. Hard-edged responses to international challenges, in particular terrorism, are now seen by both policy makers and the public as more imperative than ever. A Clintonian emphasis on institutions is no longer acceptable, either politically or strategically. The foreign policy sage George F. Kennan wrote that democracies are like dinosaurs: slow to wrath but once awakened, prone to laying about themselves with extreme determination.<sup>13</sup> The American dinosaur is awake, and unlikely to bed down again any time soon.

Similarly, the Iraq war will remain the critical issue in American foreign relations regardless of which party is in office, inflicting a continuing high cost in lives and treasure. In fact there is hardly a cigarette paper between the Iraq policies of the two candidates. Both want to internationalise the war, bring in multinational troops and train up Iraqi ones, in order to lessen the US burden in the long run and allow a gradual withdrawal of its troops. But neither is looking to leave any time soon. The US has fallen victim of what Secretary of State Colin

Powell called the 'Pottery Barn rule': you break it, you own it. America owns Iraq, and that fact will help define the next president's foreign policy. Former Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross pointed out that, one way or another, Iraq will be President Bush's legacy, so he will invest whatever resources are required to make the occupation a success. But in truth, no president can afford to let the Iraqi venture fail (although this depends on the definition of failure). The fact that all or part of nine of the US Army's ten active duty units are tied up in Iraq or Afghanistan limits the American freedom to engage in new military ventures elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

The second factor driving convergence is the fact of American primacy. The US is the prime mover in the international system. Alone among states, America is able to project its power in a truly global fashion. The US accounts for a third of world gross domestic product and almost half of world military expenditure. America's defence spend is greater than the next 15-20 biggest spenders combined; even this fact may underestimate the length of the US lead, which has as much to do with the quality of its forces as their quantity. The lead is likely to continue: America spends more on military research and development than the UK spends on defence in total.<sup>15</sup>

American predominance shapes the way its policy makers look at the world, making them partial to coercive measures and wary of being bound by alliances or international law. President Bush has been criticised for this tendency as though it is a purely personal predilection. It is not. A President Kerry might modulate this tendency, but he would not end it. At the same time, American hegemony affects the way the world behaves towards America, regardless of who is in government. Many traditional American allies would be relieved by a Kerry victory. No doubt there would be a noticeable

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

exhalation of breath, and a period of promise that could be exploited by a new Administration. But goodwill cannot cloak fundamental differences in strategy between the US and its allies. On the issue of Iraq, for example, it is not at all clear that a Kerry win would lead the allies to increase their military contribution to the rebuilding effort. After all, those European countries which argued so strongly for UN involvement in the Iraq conflict have refused to contribute troops to the Security Council-approved force authorised to protect UN staff on the ground. Why would we expect them, then, to pull America's chestnuts out of the Iraqi fire? Along the same lines, regime change in Washington will not end the anti-Americanism that is afoot around the world. Anti-Americanism has certainly been exacerbated by the Bush Administration's policies, but it was not created by them.<sup>16</sup>

Third, in the event of a Bush victory, the fact that foreign policy adventurism, especially in the form of regime change, was tried and failed in Bush's first term makes it less likely to recur in his second term. Historically, most administrations tend to become more centrist in their second terms. This effect may be exaggerated in the current case. Indeed, as Fareed Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek*, argues, the experience in Iraq has *already* chastened US foreign policy. For example, the Administration has taken a much more multilateral approach of late to dealing with both Iran (where it is working with Britain, Germany and France) and North Korea (where it is working with China, Japan, Russia and South Korea). The decision of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to renounce terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is often presented as the fruit of the neocon vine. In fact, as Martin Indyk, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, has noted, it is evidence of the power of coercive diplomacy.<sup>17</sup> Washington's rapprochement with Tripoli shows that its dream of regime change throughout the

Middle East is over. The role of ideology has been discredited in the eyes of the foreign policy establishment and, possibly, Bush himself. Faith in the reliability of US intelligence has also been undermined, which makes pre-emption even more difficult to sell.

The countervailing view to this argument is that if the Bush Administration wins re-election under such difficult circumstances, it will be emboldened rather than subdued. As Robert Gallucci, former Clinton adviser and dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, puts it, we could see a government with the ideology of Bush I but without the brakes applied by Colin Powell and his colleagues at the State Department. Certainly, the appetites of some neoconservatives remain undiminished: the former chairman of the Defence Policy Board, Richard Perle, for example, refers to Iran as "unfinished business" and hopes to "see a more vigorous policy after the election." The salience of Gallucci's argument comes down in part to one's view of President Bush. If he is, as some argue, a simple man running a "faith-based presidency", then fears about an ideological second term may prove grounded. However, the alternative position – that the Administration is cognisant of its mistakes and will move to correct them and not to repeat them – seems more persuasive. Among mainstream Republican foreign policy thinkers, certainly, one finds a new appreciation that American power, while great, is not unlimited.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, there would also be pressures on a Kerry Administration to pursue a centrist strategy. Naturally, Kerry is currently emphasising his differences from the incumbent – but even now, at the apex of the campaign, his pitch has more to do with greater effectiveness in foreign policy than a new direction. The senator does not hail from the Howard Dean wing of the Democratic Party: he



**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

supported military action, for example, in Panama in 1989 and Kosovo in 1999. Moreover, unless he was elected in a landslide, which seems highly unlikely, President Kerry would have to work with a Republican House of Representatives and probably a Republican Senate. The latter result would be particularly important because of the Senate's treaty power. Even if Kerry wanted to progress some of the issues dear to the hearts of liberals and Europeans, such as the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, he would probably be unable to get these treaties through the Senate.<sup>19</sup>

Some argue there is an outside chance that America could swing away from engagement with the world if Kerry were to win on 2 November. Certainly, Americans have had an historic predisposition – protected as they are by great oceans to their east and west and without powerful enemies to their north or south – to remain aloof from conflict and strife overseas. James Lindsay of the Council on Foreign Relations suggests there is a strong isolationist tendency among congressional Republicans which has been kept in check by the discipline of executive power. The recent criticism of the Iraq war by Pat Robertson, Christian Coalition founder and Bush supporter, may point to such concerns within the wider Republican movement.<sup>20</sup> Lindsay cautions that a Kerry victory could see the emergence of "a coalition in favour of withdrawal, made up of right-wing Republicans (who believe the world is too evil for America) and left-wing Democrats (who believe America is too evil for the world)." At the military end of the spectrum, the fear is that having fought the wrong war, the US may in the future find it difficult to fight the right war. A resurgence of US isolationism would be deeply worrying for much of the world, not least Australia, given the role America plays in keeping the peace in Asia. This seems unlikely, however.

After the Second World War, the Cold War and now the war against terrorism, the US realises it cannot escape its global role.

Two policy areas demonstrating an underlying consistency are trade and defence. Regarding the former, Bush has campaigned as a free trader while Kerry has played up the fair trade rhetoric, but in reality neither is a purist. The president's free trade principles didn't stop him in 2002 from introducing steel tariffs and signing a farm bill which was heavy with agricultural subsidies. Kerry has promised to review existing trade agreements and include labour and environmental standards in new ones; however his instincts and his Senate record are solidly pro-free trade (including votes for NAFTA, the Uruguay Round Agreements Act and 'fast-track' legislation to speed up trade negotiations) and in the executive mansion he would likely revert to type. Regarding defence, Kerry is offering some different priorities from Bush – in particular the recruitment of an additional 40,000 active duty soldiers, to be funded by the scrapping of missile defence research – but critically both men propose to maintain the current extraordinary level of defence spending and power projection capability. The global redeployment and reconfiguration of US military forces, including in Asia, is also likely to continue irrespective of who wins the election.<sup>21</sup>

The point of the above is not to argue, of course, that the policies of President Kerry and Senator Kerry are the same. They are not. Relatively small differences in strategy at the centre can translate into great effects at the periphery – where the rest of the world, including Australia, feels them. Missile defence is an example of this. In August, Australia and the US signed a memorandum of understanding establishing a quarter-century framework for cooperation on missile defence. A decision by a Kerry Administration to call a halt to the program,

## BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO

therefore, would require Canberra to rethink its strategy for protecting Australia from ballistic missile proliferation.

More substantial differences exist on approaches to nuclear proliferation and the Middle East. Whereas Bush appears to be viscerally opposed to direct negotiations with North Korea over its nuclear program, Kerry is likely to go further than the current six-party talks and offer carrots to the Pyongyang regime in bilateral discussions. He would similarly engage Iran more directly than the current Administration has, in an effort to induce them to stop their uranium enrichment and reprocessing programs – though in the final analysis, the risk of a nuclear Iran, with its close ties to terrorist organisations, would be unacceptable to either man. For the reasons set out above, the quest to recast the broader Middle East is probably over, no matter who wins. However, the result would affect the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although the candidates are united in their support of Israeli security and Palestinian statehood, a Democratic administration would likely be much more engaged in the peace process. Upon taking office, Bush downgraded America's involvement in the process; Kerry is promising to re-energise it by appointing a high-profile presidential envoy, perhaps even Bill Clinton or Jimmy Carter, to lead the American effort.<sup>22</sup>

One promising aspect of the Kerry candidacy for Australia is his long-term interest in the Asia-Pacific. Perhaps his most impressive achievement of his Senate career was his successful work with Republican Senator John McCain to build a consensus in favour of normalisation of relations between the US and Vietnam. Unlike some Democratic leaders he is not a Sinophobe, indeed in 1991 he broke party ranks to support most favoured nation trading status for Beijing. He has long been an active member of the Senate subcommittee on

East Asian and Pacific Affairs, knows the region well and is an enthusiastic supporter of American engagement with the region.<sup>23</sup>

A last caveat should be added. The other critical factor in determining America's grand strategy over the next four years is the nature of the unanticipated issues and crises which emerge under the next president's watch. Former British prime minister Harold Macmillan was famously once asked what could most easily steer a government off course. 'Events, dear boy, events', he supposedly replied. Another terrorist incident within the continental United States, for example, would alter the situation drastically. Similarly, the weakening of America's intimidatory powers by its performance in Iraq could tempt another state to mount a power play that complicates US policy.

### Personnel

An important contributor to the foreign policy style of the new Administration – and an early pointer to its direction – will be the personnel appointed by the president to key positions. During the 2000 campaign, for example, a group of Republican foreign policy experts, which included Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, Robert Zoellick and Richard Perle and which was known as 'the Vulcans', helped to polish George Bush's foreign policy message and provided a hint as to his beliefs. Most took senior positions in his Administration. It is not surprising, then, that the favourite parlour game in Washington at this stage in the electoral cycle is working out who's in and who's out. So: who is winning at the moment?<sup>24</sup>

On the Republican side of the aisle, it has been assumed for some time that Colin Powell, worn down by internecine battles with the Defence Department, was definitely leaving. However, State

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

has emerged from the Iraq scrap less battle-scarred than its rivals and there are now whispers Powell may stay at Foggy Bottom for a period, or even shift to the Pentagon. Observers are divided on the fate of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: some say that he has been irreparably damaged by the military blunders in Iraq and the Abu Ghraib controversy and at the age of seventy-two will not seek reappointment; others say with equal certainty that he is determined to complete the 'transformation' of the military and will be unwilling to allow the perception of failure that might arise from an early departure. Condoleezza Rice is almost certain to leave her current job as national security adviser but, given her closeness to President Bush, the smart money has her taking on one of the big Cabinet posts, State or Defence. The one constant among the principals, of course, is Vice President Dick Cheney. Cheney is probably more of a Hobbesian nationalist than a neocon: he believes that in a brutal world America's hand must be firm. If he continues to play a central role in policy formulation then radical shifts from the first term approach are less likely; however, some are speculating his role will decline in the wake of Iraq, as well as President Bush's growing confidence on foreign policy issues.

There are several bellwethers for the second term direction of Bush foreign policy. The first is the fate of the two key deputies, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz. If Armitage, a Powell confidant who has taken the bureaucratic battle up to his boss's opponents, were promoted it would indicate that the moderate forces were on the march. A shift by Wolfowitz, the chief author of the Iraq war plan, to the secretary's desk at Defence or even State (he is a former assistant secretary of state and ambassador to Indonesia) would indicate the opposite. One interviewee pointed out that such a promotion is not out of the question: this Administration is famously

loyal to its servants, even rehabilitating Iran-Contra veterans John Poindexter and Elliott Abrams. But in light of Wolfowitz's overly optimistic prescriptions for a stable and democratic Iraq, not to mention the difficulties of fighting a confirmation battle on his behalf, he may soon be returning to academia.

Similarly, the appointment of a moderate Republican as Secretary of State, such as Senator Dick Lugar or Senator Chuck Hagel or former Iraq proconsul L. Paul Bremer, would signify a more circumscribed foreign policy. (Bremer's recent bout of honesty about the coalition's mistakes in Iraq may, however, have damaged his prospects.<sup>25</sup>) The other race to watch is for the job of national security adviser, in which there's a field of three. The favourite is lawyer Stephen Hadley, currently Rice's deputy and, like her, more of a manager than a policy maker. The appointment of either Robert Blackwill, a former Vulcan but also a moderate realist, or John Bolton, the hard man of the State Department, would send contrasting messages about the shape of future policy.

It is harder to get a fix on the Democrats, because Kerry draws on a wider circle of advisers. It may also be less critical: although Democrats hold a full spectrum of views on foreign policy, there is not the same sense of a civil war within their policy community as there is between Republicans. Most of the key Democratic players could be described as liberal hawks. They were concerned by American hesitancy during the Balkans crises in the nineteen-nineties and are comfortable with the use of force. Almost all supported the Bush Administration's decision to go to war against Saddam Hussein.

The leading contender for secretary of state is Senator Joseph Biden, the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee. Biden is well regarded, notwithstanding his withdrawal from the

**BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO**

presidential race in 1988 after allegedly borrowing from a speech by Neil Kinnock. Biden's advantage lies in his close relationship with his fellow senator Kerry. If Biden were not to get the job – say, because it would damage the Democrats' numbers in the Senate – the second-favourite is former Balkans envoy Richard Holbrooke. Holbrooke is reputed to be a difficult man to work with, but he is also an able man, and his ideological differences from Biden are small. Sandy Berger may now be out of the running for the secretary's job because of a scandal regarding the rather prosaic matter of archival documents. Other chances are George Mitchell, the former Senate Democratic majority leader and Northern Ireland peace negotiator, or a moderate Republican such as Senator Hagel or Senator Lugar.

Candidates for Secretary of Defence under a President Kerry include presidential contender Wesley Clark, retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili, and John McCain, who could conceivably be appointed to the job by either Bush or Kerry. The frontrunner for national security adviser, though he claims not to want it, is Rand Beers, a career official and former US Marine who has been coordinating Kerry's foreign policy message during the campaign. Behind Beers and, possibly, a rehabilitated Sandy Berger, there is a long queue of Democratic foreign policy operatives who are well placed for other jobs. They include: former State Department spokesman James Rubin; former deputy national security adviser Jim Steinberg; former Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice; Kerry's long-term aide Nancy Stetson; and former Clinton Administration officials Jonathan Winer, Dan Feldman, Lee Feinstein, Ivo Daalder and Kenneth Pollack. A dark horse is Peter Galbraith, a former ambassador to Croatia who has made enemies in Canberra through his energetic advocacy of East Timor's interest in Timor Gap oil and gas, both as a UN official and a private consultant. Kerry

is known to admire Galbraith's writings on Iraq and would probably tap him for a position.

**US foreign policy and Australia**

According to a telephone survey commissioned by the Lowy Institute and undertaken by UMR Research in mid-October 2004, many Australians are unhappy with US foreign policy. Forty-two percent of those polled believed that American foreign policy is on the wrong track, while only 22% saw it as on the right track; 36% were unsure. This is a very clear result. To put it another way, of those who expressed a preference, almost two-thirds were displeased with Washington's international strategy.<sup>26</sup> The thesis of this Brief, however, is that Australians should not expect a radical shift in policy after 2 November. If John Kerry wins, the American locomotive will undoubtedly change in appearance and speed – but not so much as to jump the tracks.

What impact will the result have on Australia? The first thing to say is that the fundamentals of the relationship between the two countries are excellent. The US-Australia alliance is strong because of its strategic value to both parties. From our perspective, the alliance brings a security guarantee and access to US intelligence and technology, and helps keep the Americans engaged in our part of the world. From their perspective, Australia is an important ally, with a small but effective military and intelligence capability. More importantly, we are a reliable ally. Australia is the only country to have fought beside the US in all major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries – so we may be the most reliable of all America's allies. Regardless of which combination of the Rubik's Cube clicks into place next week – whether the personal relationship is Bush-Howard or Kerry-Howard – the alliance will endure.

## BUSH IS FROM MARS, KERRY IS FROM MARS TOO

However, the identity of the occupier of the Oval Office will surely affect the temperature of the relationship. Some commentators have argued that President Bush's re-election would be in our national interest because of the high level of comity between the Bush Administration and the government of Prime Minister John Howard. Certainly, powerful figures in Washington are well disposed to Australia and its coalition government, as evidenced by the public interventions by the president, Secretary Powell, Deputy Secretary Armitage and Ambassador Thomas Schieffer in the middle of this year, not to mention President Bush's generous comments about Mr Howard at the Republican National Convention in New York and after the PM's victory on 9 October. The feelings are mutual, judging by Mr Howard's unusual decision to endorse President Bush's re-election. The closeness of these relations, and the Australian government's agreement to participate in the Iraq war when almost all other allies refused, has earned us a privileged place in the councils of Washington.<sup>27</sup>

John Kerry and the people around him are also known to esteem Australia highly. During the confirmation hearings for Ambassador Schieffer, for example, the senator commented that "the United States has no better friend in the world than Australia". It was notable that in a tough election year, when his free trade rhetoric was slipping, he nevertheless endorsed publicly the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement.<sup>28</sup> However, our relationship with a new Kerry Administration would probably be cooler than with a re-elected Bush Administration. The reason would not be that Australia participated in a Republican-led war. The reason would be that, given the task Kerry has set himself of strengthening links with New York, Paris, Berlin, Toronto and other allied capitals, the relationship with Canberra would likely be less of a priority. Our support in

Iraq would still be appreciated, but it would not have the special emotional resonance it currently holds. It would be less 'special'. On the other hand, there would be compensating factors. It can be uncomfortable for a middle power such as Australia to be too close to a great power. Given the animus felt towards the current US administration, including in our region, aspects of our diplomatic life would be made easier by the election of a new face in Washington.

### Conclusion

In sum, the result next Tuesday will flow down into many aspects of American policy. The personalities of the key officeholders, from the person of the president down, will be observed keenly around the world. Positions on individual issues are up for grabs. The temperature of Australia's bilateral relationship with the US will be affected, although its underlying health will not. However, these differences should not obscure the underlying similarities between the two foreign policy visions on offer. No matter who is president, America will continue to pursue a muscular international strategy involving the use of force to secure its objectives – and all Earthlings should understand this.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, Let us now praise great men: bringing the statesman back in. *International Security* 25 (4) 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Kagan, *Paradise and power: America and Europe in the new world order*. London, Atlantic Books, 2003. p. 3. On international antipathy towards President Bush, see e.g. *Globescan*. Poll of 35 countries finds 30 prefer Kerry, 3 Bush: *Globescan* press release. 8 September 2004: [http://www.globescan.com/news\\_archives/GlobeScan-PIPA\\_Release.pdf](http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/GlobeScan-PIPA_Release.pdf).; and Peter Hartcher, Attitudes harden as Bush seeks fresh mandate. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 October 2004, pp. 8-9.

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<sup>4</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, Surprise, security, and the American experience. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2004. pp. 52-54.

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<sup>12</sup> Daalder and Lindsay, *America unbound: the Bush revolution in foreign policy*. p. 85.; Marshall, *Kerry faces the world*.; Bai, *Kerry's undeclared war*.

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<sup>14</sup> Matt Kelley, Troop strength in Iraq won't be cut before 2005 ; surge in violence prompts decision. *The Record*, 5 May 2004, p. A10.

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<sup>21</sup> How to pick a president. *The Economist*, 9 October 2004.; Alan M. Field, Free trader. *Journal of Commerce*, 26 July 2004. Strong at home, respected in the world: the 2004 Democratic national platform for America. Democratic National Convention Committee 2004: <http://a9.g.akamai.net/7/9/8082/v002/www.democrats.org/pdfs/2004platform.pdf>; pp. 12-14; [www.cfr.org/campaign2004/](http://www.cfr.org/campaign2004/); interviews listed in the appendix and other personal communications.

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