The Bush Foreign Policy Revolution, Its Origins, and Alternatives

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The Revolution in US Foreign Policy

i. The Bush Revolution

Bush … set in motion a revolution in American foreign policy.¹

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George W. Bush campaigned for the presidency in 2000 as a ‘compassionate conservative,’ a moderate who would govern from the middle ground. His comments during the campaign seemed designed to indicate that foreign policy would not be his preoccupation, although he thought America should play an active role in world affairs. Yet during one of the televised presidential debates, he opposed what he called ‘nation building.’ He warned against the danger of ‘over-committing our military around the world’ and complained that President Clinton had done just that. He criticised what he described as a lack of focus in Clinton’s foreign policy. He promised a foreign policy that would be ‘humble in how we treat nations that are figuring out how to chart their own course. If we’re an arrogant nation, they’ll resent us. If we’re humble, but strong, they’ll welcome us.’ He seemed to believe that Americans were isolationist, saying in a campaign address on foreign policy that ‘America’s first temptation is withdrawal.’ He said that he would not lead America into protracted foreign military interventions.

Shortly after a majority of the divided Supreme Court settled the dispute about votes in Florida in favour of Bush by a partisan vote, he started to name his cabinet and other senior appointees. Colin Powell, who was more popular than Bush, was the natural selection for the top foreign policy position of Secretary of State, even though his
relations with Vice President Dick Cheney were cool. The eight Republican foreign policy experts who had advised Bush during the campaign, and who nick-named themselves the Vulcans, received prominent positions, amongst them: Condoleezza Rice as National Security Adviser and Paul Wolfowitz as Deputy Secretary of Defence. Cheney prepared to seek dominance in national security policy by appointing a dozen high calibre foreign policy staff.

The newly inaugurated Administration immediately started radical changes in US foreign policy. The disjunction with previous American foreign policy was dramatic and unilateral. On the new president’s third day in office, the US withdrew funding for the UN Population Fund, because it refused to prohibit abortion advice by non-government organisations to which it contributed. Engagement with peacemaking efforts between Israel and Palestine and North and South Korea stopped. Research on missile defence became a top priority.

During the first nine months, Bush announced withdrawal from or opposition to several arms control, environmental and criminal accountability treaties. These announcements included: plans to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty so as to remove an impediment to research on missile defence; withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and intense opposition to the establishment of the International Criminal Court, for fear that American troops or political leaders might be charged. The Administration even refused to sign the UN Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. It also diluted a UN agreement aiming to constrain illegal trafficking in small arms; and scuttled efforts to enforce the verification procedures of a global ban on biological weapons, because these might have risked the exposure of American corporations’ secrets. ‘For six years everybody talks of the importance of verification,’ wrote the British newspaper, The Independent, ‘… and then, America discovers that its facilities, too, would have to be verified. The brazen nerve! America might be treated as though it were just another country.’ These rejections of multilateral order were so dramatic that The New York Times editorialised in July that the Bush Administration’s ‘hostile attitude communicates a sense of arrogance and contempt for international cooperation.’

The bombing of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 evoked intense, worldwide sympathy for the United States. Not only was there horror at what had happened, but also a sharply increased sense of vulnerability everywhere. Most countries expressed immediate support for President Bush’s call for an alliance to fight terrorism. For a few weeks, the rhetoric about a global alliance against terrorism raised hope that there had been a shift within the Administration towards multilateralism. Sympathy for those involved in the massive trauma led to suspension of disbelief about Administration actions. In fact, the decision to launch the ‘War on Terrorism’ became a cloak for even more determined, exclusive unilateralism. Fear of terrorism replaced fear of communism as the prism through which the American Government viewed foreign policy.
The presence of Al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan with the acquiescence of the Taliban Government and the Taliban’s refusal to expel Al-Qaeda led to international acceptance of the case for the US invasion of that country. A number of countries made military contributions to the war against the Taliban, because it was providing state cover for Al-Qaeda. After the war, these and many other countries co-operated in recovery and development programs in Afghanistan.

The enormity of the change in American policy became fully clear when President Bush spoke at West Point on 1 June 2002 of the new strategic doctrine of pre-emption. Abandoning the strategy of containment and deterrence as relevant only to the cold war, he said that the US would use pre-emptive military force wherever it saw fit against ‘unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction’ and against ‘shadowy terrorist networks.’

Sir Brian Urquhart, an eminent, retired UN Under-Secretary-General, commented: ‘The doctrine of unilateral pre-emption … flies in the face of the basic idea of the UN Charter, which prohibits any international use of force except in self-defense against armed attack across an international border, or pursuant to a decision of the Security Council. It is clear that if other states, in emulation of the United States, were to adopt and act on the idea of unilateral pre-emption, the world would quickly dissolve into international anarchy.’

Paul O’Neill, Bush’s first Secretary of the Treasury, comments that the two big ideas of the Administration – ongoing tax cuts on the domestic front, and the doctrine of “pre-emption” in foreign affairs, were both big, sweeping ideas that were in collision with reality. Unprovoked aggression is contrary to the most basic principles of human interaction. Bullies start fights.

The seminal document describing the Bush revolution in foreign policy is the National Security Strategy of the United States of America published in September 2002. Owen Harries writes that ‘In my judgement, this document is, with a doubt, the most important statement about American foreign policy, not just since the terrorist attack, and not just since the end of the Cold War, but since the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which committed the United States to resisting further communist expansion.’

It begins with a statement of principles by President Bush. ‘In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage.’ ‘We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. … We are also guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. … The United States is committed to lasting institutions like the United Nations …’

The striking feature of the body of the Strategy is the paranoia of the worldview that underlies it. The Administration perceives America as threatened by ‘rogue states and their terrorist clients.’ Yet North Korea is the only country named as seeking nuclear weapons; no other examples are given and there is no description of any link between North Korea or any other state and terrorists. ‘Rogue states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means. They know that such attacks would fail. Instead, they rely on acts of terror and, potentially, the use of weapons of mass destruction …’ (Tragically, terrorists used conventional means very successfully on 9/11.) This sounds
like a justification for invading Iraq, and so has lost potency after the failure to find any
evidence of weapons of mass destruction there. If the scenario were real it would indeed
be frightening, but there does not seem to be a single country of which it is a completely
accurate description. It reflects the long-held view of Washington hawks that ‘any
serious “strategic” threat to America’s security could only come from an established
nation.’ President Bush’s advisors had a state-centred mind-set. This myth making is
the basis for adoption of the doctrine of pre-emptive war. ‘… our security will require all
Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for pre-emptive action when
necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.’ Pre-emption became the Bush
doctrine.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. writes: ‘Mr Bush has replaced a policy aimed at peace
through the prevention of war by a policy aimed at peace through preventive war. …
During the long years of the cold war, preventive war was unmentionable. Its advocates
were regarded as loonies.’ Schlesinger defines pre-emptive war as the response to ‘a
direct, immediate, specific threat to the US that must be crushed at once; … Preventive
war refers to potential, future, therefore speculative threats. Pre-emptive war hovers on
the margin of legitimacy. … Preventive war has no such claim to legitimacy.’ Henry
Kissinger agrees ‘It is not in the American national interest to establish pre-emption as a
universal principle available to every nation.’ ‘But to reserve that principle to the United
States alone is to make our nation the world’s judge, jury and executioner,’ comments
Schlesinger. The Nuremberg judgements treated pre-emptive attack as a war crime.

If, as asserted in the Strategy, the US is ‘menaced less by fleets and armies than
by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few,’ why is the US
undertaking a massive expansion of armaments? Is this the most cost-effective method
of preparing to combat terrorists? Does combating terrorism really justify increasing
military expenditure from about $300 billion in 2001 to about $500 billion in 2004?
Even some conservatives are critical of using protection against terrorism as the rationale
to justify the massive increase in military spending.

An especially shocking note towards the end of the Strategy promises to ‘protect
Americans’ by ensuring that the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is
not extended to American forces. The ICC is the first international tribunal for trying
individuals charged with genocide or other crimes against humanity. The Administration
opposes the ICC because it claims that Americans serving overseas might be subject to
politically motivated prosecutions. Renunciation of involvement in the International
Criminal Court involved also repudiating the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
that requires signatory countries to take no action that would undermine treaties they
have signed.

To coerce other countries into rejecting the ICC, the Administration threatened to
veto all UN peacekeeping missions at the UN unless countries guaranteed its soldiers
exemption from the Court. Even more threateningly, the Administration persuaded
Congress to include in the American Servicemembers Protection Act a provision
empowering it to withdraw military assistance from all countries (other than a select list
of NATO members and other close allies) if they ratified the ICC treaty. In July 2003, the US decided to freeze military aid to thirty-five nations that refused to exempt US soldiers from the jurisdiction of the ICC. Congress has accepted this unilateral approach to foreign policy more readily since the elections in November 2002, when the Republicans won control of the Senate in addition to the House.

An especially disappointing rejection of international cooperation in 2004 was the Bush Administration’s decision to renounce the goal, set by President Clinton, of compliance by 2006 with the treaty banning the production, use, and sale of land mines. Early in 2004, the US Government announced that it would continue to produce land mines (though sophisticated versions, which deactivate themselves after specified times). In doing so, the US proclaims in yet another area that it applies different rules to itself than in this case to those agreed by the 150 countries that have renounced use of anti-personnel mines. The effect will be to deflate global pressure to abandon land mines.

What are the implications of all this? The United States is by far the richest and militarily most powerful nation in world history. The radical Bush Administration is the first in America to position itself on the far right. The ‘war on terror’ is the over-riding, organising principle of the Administration’s foreign policy. The Administration believes American security requires US global hegemony. It has discarded the multilateral system and although it accepts that international institutions and treaties might sometimes be useful, it has abandoned the instinctive multilateralism of the earlier part of the post-war period. The Vulcans assert that the world must now accept American ‘primacy.’

US actions seem to be indicating that to the Administration treaties including the UN Charter are now disposable. Alliances are only useful when supportive. International institutions are an impediment to freedom of manoeuvre. This is a paradox since the National Security Strategy includes amongst the characteristics of ‘rogue states’ that they ‘display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbours, and callously violate international treaties to which they are a party; … ’ On this criterion, the United States is a rogue state.

Treaties, alliances, and international institutions are subsidiary because, in the minds of the Vulcans, military power is the prime determinant of international relations. ‘Who can doubt,’ writes Arthur Schlesinger Jr., ‘that there is an American empire? – an ‘informal’ empire, not colonial in polity, but still richly equipped with imperial paraphernalia: troops, ships, planes, bases, proconsuls, local collaborators, all spread around the luckless planet.’ George W. Bush is the emperor in imperial America.

ii. The Irresponsible President

Power always thinks it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak: and that it is doing God’s service when it is violating all His laws.

John Adams
George W. Bush grew up in a secure and privileged family. He studied at Yale and Harvard, worked in Washington while his father was president, and became CEO of a small Texas business. He enjoys partying: ‘He moves towards conviviality like a heat-seeking missile,’ says Paul O’Neill. When forty years old he lacked direction and was drinking too much. Then he experienced conversion, was born again, became personally disciplined – rising and retiring early and having an hour or so of exercise each day – and purposeful. He is a doer rather than a thinker, ‘more interested in action than introspection,’ and self-confident about the rightness of his decisions. *The New York Times* described him as ‘a man who was reared in privilege, who succeeded in both business and politics because of his family connections.’

Kevin Phillips, the biographer of the Bush family, provides ‘an unusual and unflattering portrait of a great family (great in power, not in morality) that has built a base over the course of the twentieth century in the back corridors of the new military-industrial complex and in close association with the growing intelligence and national security establishments.’ It is a family in which ‘their progeny have become almost exclusively financial entrepreneurs.’ There are no philanthropists or reformers. ‘They seek public office but, if anything, they seem to feel that the public is there to serve them.’ Paul Krugman, eminent economist and columnist in *The New York Times*, suggests that George W’s ‘motivations are dynastic – to secure the family’s rightful place.’

A vital element is his confidence in his sense of calling, of having God-given inspiration for his daunting tasks. ‘Bush’s most conspicuous value in January 2001 was utter certainty of purpose.’ There are many stories of his lack of interest in evidence and analysis and yet of his confidence in his actions. Paul O’Neill, Bush’s first Secretary of the Treasury, says your ‘action needs to be proportional to the depth of evidence that underlies your conviction. I marvel at the conviction that the President has in terms of this war. Amazing, … With his level of experience, I would not be able to support his level of conviction.’

A vivid example of Bush’s lack of interest in evidence and analysis was the first official meeting between Bush and O’Neill. O’Neill began by offering a fifteen-minute overview of the important issues. Bush asked no questions. He looked at O’Neill, not changing his expression, not letting on that he had any reactions – either positive or negative. ‘I wondered, from the first, if the President didn’t know the questions to ask,’ O’Neill recalled, ‘or did he know and just not want to know the answers? … It was strange.’ Ron Suskind, O’Neill’s biographer, writes ‘The problem, O’Neill felt, was … the President’s lack of inquisitiveness or pertinent experience … The President was starting from scratch on most issues and relying on ideologues …’

Bush apparently believes that his decisions are divinely inspired. His chief speechwriter says that Bush believes that ‘he is called by God to lead the nation.’ Another staffer observes that Bush believes he ‘somehow may be an instrument of Providence.’ A third observer comments ‘Bush’s faith means that he does not tolerate, or
even recognize, ambiguity: there is an all-knowing God who decrees certain behaviors, and leaders must obey. This is made repeatedly clear in his constant presentation of issues as black or white, people as good or bad, countries as either with America against terrorism or in favour of terrorism: ‘You are either for us or against us.’ Even when addressing the UN he said: ‘Events during the past two years have set before us the clearest divides: between those who seek order, and those who spread chaos …’ This simplistic dichotomy distorts understanding of human life, for it neglects the evil in every person and nation as well as the capacity for love, justice and mercy that is part of every human being and community.

The central scriptural political themes of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are about justice and peace. There might be some lessons for President Bush in focusing more on what the scriptures actually instruct and less on his own fallible understanding. Massive tax cuts for the rich are hardly just, and starting a war with Iraq is scarcely peaceful. He could also have benefited from listening to the carefully considered comments of the leaders of mainstream churches, all of whom – the Pope, Presiding Bishops and Moderators – were united in their opposition to the American invasion of Iraq.

During the presidential campaign, Bush described the president’s role as being the nation’s chief executive officer, a natural description based on his business training at Harvard. Being a CEO involves setting the agenda, selecting effective people to implement it, and being decisive, but it also involves heading an authoritarian organisation. Most corporations are the antithesis of a democracy: they are hierarchical, directive and coercive and require conformity and obedience from their personnel. An elected CEO could act like a dictator between elections – and Bush has attempted to do so.

In the area of foreign policy, the first impression of many Americans was that Bush was out of his depth. He had certainly travelled internationally very little and apparently did not even have a passport at the time of the presidential campaign. When asked during a radio interview, he did not know the names of the leaders of four specified countries. His ignorance of the rest of the world and of cultural differences has become famous.

Despite this, as President, George W Bush has been the folksy chair of an exclusive country club, looking after his plutocratic mates. Paul Krugman writes that ‘he leads an elitist clique trying to maintain a populist façade.’ The characteristic style of the Administration’s work has been policies in the interests of the wealthy – tax cuts, and secret deals in the interest of American corporations – and the conservative policies of the social extremists.

In private he apparently has no interest in dialogue or conversation; in other words, no interest in deepening understanding or in searching for the truth. Paul O’Neill has made the most authoritative published comments about Bush’s managerial style. He reports that all decisions involved only political considerations. The President never
analysed a complex question, or considered opposing positions before settling on a judicious path. O’Neill’s biographer, Ron Suskind, writes that ‘It seemed suddenly [to O’Neill] that there were no let’s-look-at-the-facts brokers in any of the key White House positions. A strict code of personal fealty to Bush – animated by the embrace of a few unquestioned ideologues [Dick Cheney, Karl Rove, Karen Hughes, Andrew Card, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz] – seemed to be in collision with a faith in the broader ideals of honest inquiry.’

There was no policy apparatus. ‘The President was caught in an echo chamber of his own making, cut off from everyone other than a circle around him that’s tiny and getting smaller and in concert on everything – a circle that conceals him from the public view and keeps him away from the one thing he needs most: honest, disinterested perspectives about what’s real and what the hell he might do about it.’

Much of the White House press corps believes that he is sometimes isolated not only from the press but from reality.

Cabinet meetings were carefully scripted. Participants were told beforehand whether they could speak and what they could say. Bush did not read reports before the meeting. O’Neill thought that he did not even appear to have read the short memos he sent over. Of one meeting O’Neill commented that ‘The only way I can describe it is that, well, the President is like a blind man in a room full of deaf people. There is no discernible connection.’

In public, Bush stays rigidly ‘on message,’ never deviating from asserting the current position. That is one reason why he spoke to military audiences forty-five times during the first two and a half years of his presidency, but rarely makes unscripted appearances to the public. Members of the military are required to be resoundingly supportive when addressed by their commander-in-chief. At some special moments, however, Bush can seem emotionally disengaged: his feigned belligerence is unconvincing. His habitual smirk suggests lack of seriousness, although it could equally well be a sign of nervousness.

Why then has he been popular? Principally because he has been leader during what the majority of Americans believe, and hear repetitively, is wartime. Acceptance of the metaphor of war follows from the fear and insecurity caused by the 9/11 bombings. During wartime, it is essential to be patriotic, and this includes supporting the president. Any deviation from such loyalty risks the description of treason. The popular political comedian and reformer, Michael Moore, notes accurately that ‘The high ratings for Bush are not an endorsement of his policies. Rather, it is the response of a frightened country that has no choice but to back the man charged with protecting them.’ Apart from the first couple of days after September 11th, he has been, with some credibility, described as decisive. He speaks uncompromisingly and with the sincerity of someone who believes what he is saying. Many voters say they have faith in Bush because he has faith. They believe he knows where the story leads and where the book ends. His lack of analytical interest facilitates his unawareness of the contradictions between his stated policies and what the Administration is actually doing. Schlesinger writes perceptively that ‘…the President is secure in himself, disciplined, decisive and crafty, and capable of concentrating on a few priorities. … [he] radiates a serene but scary certitude.’
Bush is a true representative of the corporate and ideological wings of the Republican Party. The present Republican coalition has two major poles: big corporations and the ideological right. His relationship with big business is close – in energy, media, the military-industrial complex, agribusiness, multinational construction, and parts of Wall St. The ideological wing includes the Evangelical Christians and the Jewish right, market fundamentalists and their think tanks, and the large audiences of the relentlessly right wing radio and television commentators.

Yet the actions of his Administration rarely measure up to his rhetoric. His regressive tax cuts have not led to employment growth. His talk of a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan led only to the allocation of sufficient funds to contain disorder in Kabul. His lofty plans for making Iraq a model of democracy were always superficial, but the Administration’s determination to hand over political responsibility by July 2004 regardless of the situation demonstrated that minimising negative impact on the November Presidential elections was the highest priority. A correspondent to The New York Times in February 2004 succinctly described the reasons for which many Americans loath Bush. ‘Bush campaigned as a moderate; even so, he lost the popular vote and became president under deeply divisive circumstances. Yet without anything resembling a mandate, he has moved aggressively to reshape American society for the benefit of corporate bureaucrats and fundamentalist Christians. We … have watched Bush and company, with their winner take all mentality, take a wrecking ball to everything that makes our lives liveable, from civil liberties, environmental protection and labor rights to a federal tax structure capable of supporting Social Security and Medicare.’

George W. Bush has misled America. He has been an irresponsible president without a serious, educated interest in issues. He is an amateur. He has not engaged sufficiently with the issues to be able to take decisions on a well-informed basis. His appearance before the 9/11 Commission with Vice-President Cheney demonstrated to the nation the lack of confidence of his staff in his ability to handle unscripted public occasions alone. Bush has been misguided by his advisers.

It has been suggested that the nature of nightmares determine the motivations of foreign policy makers: those who dream of the horrors of war, struggle for peace; those who dream of threatening monsters, struggle for military security. George W. Bush’s obsessive talk of evil countries and of terrorists suggests that he dreams of evil monsters.

iii. The Vulcans: the Political Force behind the President

[After September 11] the Vulcans put forth a remarkable series of new doctrines and ideas. … They represented an epochal change, the flowering of a new view of America’s status and role in the world. The vision was that of an unchallengeable America, a United States whose military power was so awesome that it no longer needed to make compromises or accommodations …
The power of the advisors to the American CEO is such that understanding their ideas and style is vital to interpreting policy. Most of the Vulcans worked for the forty-first president, George Bush Senior. When George W. appointed them to advise him during the presidential election campaign, their friendships and antipathies were well established. They mostly cooperate with passion, for they share an ideology. They pride themselves on being hawks, conservative foreign policy hard-liners.

The Vulcans gave themselves the nickname, after the Roman god of fire, the forge and metalwork, the god of whom there used to be a huge fifty-six-foot statue in Birmingham, Alabama, Rice’s hometown. The best known are the Vice-President, Dick Cheney; Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary for Defense; Condoleezza Rice, Bush’s National Security Adviser; Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense; and Richard Armitage, the Deputy Secretary of State. There are many others of like mind including Richard Perle, a former member of the Defense Policy Board, Douglas Feith, Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, and others outside the Administration who generate supportive propaganda.

Washington observers describe Cheney as the most powerful Vice President ever. Richard Clarke, Clinton and Bush’s counterterrorism chief, writes that ‘Below [Cheney’s] surface calm ran strong, almost extreme beliefs. He had been one of the five most radical conservatives in the Congress. The quiet often hid views that would seem out of place if aired more broadly.’

In 1992, Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz oversaw the writing of a Pentagon study called the ‘Defence Planning Guidance Draft’ the theme of which was that the US was so militarily dominant that it could impose its will anywhere. ‘The United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated.’ Other Republicans repudiated the document, but its writers continued to advocate the views it contained. In 2000, neoconservatives published an even more assertive paper entitled ‘Project for a New American Century.’ This paper called for establishment of a global American empire with dominant military forces based around the world. Such people are American supremacists.

These Vulcans, or hegemons as Daalder and Lindsay call them, have half a dozen principal beliefs:

- First, that this is ‘a world of terror and missiles and madmen’ as George W. Bush describes it, an unrelievedly dangerous and threatening place;
- Second, that nation-states are still the key actors;
- Third, that military force is the most effective means for achieving international ends, and that military power should be used solely in America’s interest;
- Fourth, that in times of crisis, democratic procedures should take a secondary place to ‘unyielding leadership’;
• Fifth, that international treaties and institutions are of only subsidiary value for achieving diplomatic goals; and
• Sixth, that America is a unique great power – a benign power with good intentions – and therefore does not need to seek legitimacy from the approval of others, or comply with international treaties and norms.\textsuperscript{37}

Several of the Vulcans were students of Professor Albert Wohlstetter of the University of Chicago who argued throughout the cold war that the US had to plan to fight a nuclear war in order to deter it and so opposed nuclear arms control. Leo Strauss, a German Jewish political philosopher who arrived in the US in 1938 also taught or inspired some of the group through his writing.

Leo Strauss believed that hostile elements abroad threaten liberal democracies, and that strong rulers must be prepared to deceive the population. Earl Shorris, a writer who has carefully studied Strauss, comments that: ‘One of the great services that Strauss and his disciples have performed for the Bush regime has been the provision of a philosophy of the noble lie, the conviction that lies, far from being simply a regrettable necessity of political life, are instead virtuous and noble instruments of wise policy.’\textsuperscript{38} Strauss thought the purpose of education was to found an aristocracy. He wrote of ‘the vulgarity of democratic society.’ Only the educated elite were fit to rule, he wrote, and they had a natural right to do so, the right of the superior to rule over the inferior. His belief in natural law leads to the discarding of contracts because they are mere laws of men. Such a pattern of thought is useful to Bush when he thinks he has a higher, religious law to implement than international treaties. Strauss argued that a political order is stable only if united by an external threat and that if no external threat exists then one should be manufactured. A student of his philosophy, Shadia Drury, concludes that ‘Perpetual war not perpetual peace is what Strauss believed in. Such views naturally lead to an aggressive, belligerent foreign policy.’\textsuperscript{39} Earl Shorris concludes ‘The Straussians say the greatest danger to the United States comes not only from weakness in the face of enemies but also from the failure to believe in its own superiority.’\textsuperscript{40}

The Vulcans are militarists. The Pentagon was their training ground. Most of them have not fought in war, however. They prefer the use of military power to consultative or diplomatic action for resolving conflicts. They affirm not only contemporary American military dominance but also aim to guarantee that pre-eminence indefinitely through military research and development. Their vision of military dominance implicitly includes a crucial and enhanced role for the intelligence services. They considered invasion-induced regime change a panacea for Afghanistan and Iraq. Some of them have said that those countries were only a start: they seek also democratic transformations of Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, and other countries are apparently on their agenda as well. Most surprisingly, they seemed to believe initially that such American hegemony would not motivate responses, because of the ‘benevolence’ of American intentions.

\textit{iv. Militarism}
Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power, nothing.

Paul Kennedy

In the early years of the twenty-first century, the military were the most revered institution in America. Confidence in the military had been growing since America’s withdrawal from Vietnam and the abandonment of the compulsory military draft. A Gallup Poll, taken soon after completion of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, showed that 76 per cent of Americans had ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of confidence in the military. This compared with 45 per cent who had the same level of confidence in the leaders of organised religion, and 29 per cent in the members of Congress. Some Americans perceived the military as a bastion of national values, where men and women served their country.

Since the end of the second Iraq war, questioning of these attitudes has been growing. The swift overthrow of Saddam Hussein was a military success, but the failure to establish civil order has been a catastrophe. Rapid privatisation of military activity has eroded community confidence in the commitment to national service of all engaged in the military. Increasing knowledge of the pay of private military contractors has generated envy within the armed forces, amongst their families and supporters, and more generally around the community. Resignation rates from the armed forces have risen. Publicity about the sordid abuse of Iraqi prisoners, and the suspicion that such brutality is widespread in American military prisons, has multiplied this scepticism. The image of the US military has been damaged within America as well as internationally.

A US preference for military force and disdain for diplomacy existed well before the inauguration of the Bush Administration. Both the Clinton and Bush Administrations have relied increasingly on the military for international diplomatic, political, economic, and even social action. The dispassionate Washington Post journalist Dana Priest writes: ‘The military simply filled a vacuum left by an indecisive White House, an atrophied State Department, and a distracted Congress.’ Yet the military are not trained or equipped for post-war humanitarian assistance or recovery, as shown in Kosovo and in Iraq, let alone for most action opposing drug trafficking and terrorism.

Many observers discern a lower threshold for military action in the United States than in other countries. Does America have a habitual tendency to wage war in ways that are disproportionate to the threat? The documentary film The Fog of War, constructed around an interview with the former Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, raises these questions dramatically by showing something of the destruction in earlier wars. Towards the end of the Pacific War, America not only dropped atomic bombs on two cities, but also killed over 350,000 civilians by firebombing Japanese cities, killing 100,000 in one night in Tokyo. During the Vietnam War, three million Vietnamese were killed as well as 58,000 Americans. McNamara says that one of the lessons of these wars is that ‘proportionality should be a guideline in war’ but that was not a principle followed in 1945 or in the late sixties and early seventies, let alone in Iraq.
There is, however, also great diversity of opinion within the US about the use of force; some large groups such as mainstream and peace churches and many scholars advocate restraint. Disagreement about the appropriate use of military power is one of the principal underlying causes of conflict between the Departments of Defense and State.

The American military is the most powerful the world has ever known. America has military superiority in every area of conventional weaponry, with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and with their delivery systems. For example, at sea, the US has nine supercarrier battle groups and a tenth is under construction. These super aircraft carriers have crews of 4,500 to 6000. Cruisers surrounded them and nuclear submarines guard them when they are on mission. There are no other supercarriers in the world. Russia has one modern aircraft carrier with about half the tonnage of a supercarrier and Britain and France have a few small aircraft carriers. The US has naval dominance of the seas.

Similarly, the US dominates airpower. The US has three types of stealth aircraft, two bombers, and a fighter. No stealth aircraft exist elsewhere. Several countries have small numbers of heavy bombers, but the US has entire wings. No other country has the aerial tanker fleet capacity which enables the US to send its bombers anywhere in the world. US radar capacity is far superior to that of any other country. The accuracy as well as the numbers of US missiles are in a superior class to those of any other country.

The US has about 6,000 operationally deployed thermonuclear weapons of which around 2,000 are on intercontinental ballistic missiles, 3,500 on submarine launched ballistic missiles and a few hundred carried by bomber aircraft. What circumstances could justify such a nuclear arsenal? The only conceivable possibility is a pre-emptive attack on Russia or China. The danger is that the Russian and Chinese defence planners will fear this, keep their own nuclear forces on alert, multiplying the risk of retaliation to a misjudged perception of pre-emptive attack by one side or the other. Such a risk is not acute but it is chronic. ‘It is the only threat we face that could destroy our country beyond our ability to recover. Compared with this threat, all other concerns about terrorism or rogue countries shrink into insignificance,’ writes Steven Weinberg. The only value of this enormous nuclear arsenal is that it could provide advantage in negotiations for major nuclear disarmament.

Yet the Bush Administration has both abrogated the treaty limiting anti-ballistic missile systems, to facilitate research on missile defence, and revived the idea of developing nuclear weapons for first use rather than for defence. The Missile Defence Agency is going to deploy the first ten interceptors during 2004 and more are to follow. Yet the technology is unproven and much costly research is underway. The Defense Department is also commissioning research on relatively small nuclear arms that could pierce rock and reinforced concrete and so destroy enemy bunkers buried deep underground. This resumed research into small nuclear weapons reverses a 10-year ban on research into weapons with a yield of less than five kilotons. Such research is one reason for the refusal of the Bush Administration to renounce the first use of nuclear
weapons. It violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), so undermining the commitment of other signatory countries to stop developing nuclear weapons capability; and risking breaching the firewall between conventional and nuclear weapons.

Global reach is a clear indicator of US military dominance. The Department of Defense acknowledges 725 military bases outside the US.\textsuperscript{45} US Special Operations Forces are active in 125 countries. The five regional commanders-in-chief (CinCs) divide the world between them, and act and live like kings within their regional territories. All CinCs are allocated a long distance aircraft and a fleet of helicopters and travel with an entourage of up to thirty-five officers.

The historian Paul Kennedy writes ‘I have returned to all of the comparative defence spending and military personnel statistics over the last five hundred years [and] no other nation comes close’ to the dominance of the United States. Yet despite such dominance, at least some politicians believe that further emphasis on military strength is electorally necessary. For example, presidential contender General Wesley Clark thought he should advocate as an alternative prescription ‘… a more powerful but less arrogant America ….’\textsuperscript{46} Political analyst Stanley Greenberg advises the Democrat presidential nominee to ‘Support use of force and maintaining US military power beyond challenge’ and to ‘Expand the numbers in the US military to meet military and peacekeeping obligations and ensure morale and readiness.’\textsuperscript{47}

These are the reasons why US military expenditure is about half of total world spending on defence. In fiscal year 2005, the military budget request is $462 billion for military and non-military tools including the cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.\textsuperscript{48} This is 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product. The budget category that received the largest boost between 2002 and 2004 was military research and development, up from $40 billion to $69 billion, an increase aimed at maintaining American military technical dominance rather than combating terrorism.

In comparison the annual budget for the United Nations is $1.4 billion, so in 2004 the US was spending about 50 times as much on military R & D alone as was being spent by all countries on the UN. Can it be long before advocates for the starved American social and community services, let alone for peacemaking, poverty reduction and environmental conservation nationally and internationally, start to advocate reductions in utterly excessive and wasteful military expenditure to provide more funds for these deprived programs?

Some American national security specialists argue that this level of military expenditure is justified by the unique role of the US in global security. They suggest too that America’s eminence makes it more of a military target than other countries. Yet conceding both of those points says little about the actual level of outlays. There is a strong case that current US military expenditure is excessive, wasteful, provocative, and dangerous and that Americans and the world would be safer by reducing military expenditure. Such military dominance is dangerous because, as Owen Harries notes, ‘the
availability of means [tends] to determine ends, and power to set its own agenda.\textsuperscript{49} One of many reasons is simply that warriors like to experiment with their weapons.

The military build up is another aspect of the cosy relationship between the Administration and large corporations. Increased orders for weapons are the conventional means through which corporations benefit from war, but also during the last decade, privatisation of services to the military has spread rapidly. The Pentagon is contracting out every conceivable service except firing a rifle and dropping a bomb. The proportion of American personnel from the private sector – that is, who are employed by private contractors – increased from one per cent during the first Iraq war to a third during the second.\textsuperscript{50} ‘We’re turning the lifeblood of our defense over to the marketplace,’ writes Peter W. Singer of the Brookings Institution. A major consequence is the sacrifice of public accountability: private contractors are not subject to freedom of information laws or direct Congressional oversight. Private companies can justify concealing details of their activities from public scrutiny as protection of trade secrets. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to suggest the possibility of war profiteering. One unexpected result of privatizing battlefield services is that there is less opposition from the uniformed services to fighting wars.

Action by the military is replacing diplomacy and deterrence, multilateral negotiation, international advocacy, and even cooperation with international corporate and civilian networks, for achieving international purposes. Dana Priest writes that ‘After the last seismic world event – the collapse of the Soviet Union – a Democratic administration, aided by a Republican-controlled Congress, had turned to the US military to help manage world affairs. September 11 forced the next realignment. This time a Republican administration, cheered on by both parties in Congress, was turning once again to the military for solutions. For America’s military, though, it was business as usual. Taking the lead had become The Mission.’\textsuperscript{51} A tendency throughout the last decade, to militarise diplomacy, has become the norm under President Bush.

The extent of this military power is, however, neither economically sustainable nor as influential as the Vulcans imagine. In 2004, the forecast budget deficit is 5.9 per cent of gross domestic product.\textsuperscript{52} On reasonable assumptions, the US will still have a significant budget deficit at the end of the decade. Tax increases would reduce the deficit, but electoral opinion makes them difficult, even though America is one of the lowest taxed developed countries. Military spending is nearly half of discretionary expenditure so advocacy for cuts is likely to increase as supporters of other services and social protection seek to prevent erosion of the areas of their concern. In any case, military expenditure moves in cycles: after a period of rapid increase, scepticism tends to increase as the urgency of the threat fades, as stories of military waste and misuse are publicised, as new weapons systems fail, and when military scandals occur. Failure of the US military to create orderly public security in Iraq will look like defeat, especially since the fault is principally that of the Pentagon planners.

There are clearly limits to the usefulness of American military strength. Military hegemony does not automatically correlate with international political power. America
could not persuade the member countries of the UN Security Council to mandate and invasion of Iraq. While the US military was able to conquer quickly a demoralized and decaying Iraq, it has not been able to impose order there. Nor has it done so in Afghanistan, partly because it has not been willing to invest the resources required to achieve national order, and more importantly because order can only be permanently achieve by national forces. This does not mean that there is any chance of the US ceasing to be military dominant during the next two or three decades or longer. American military dominance could continue with half of current outlays, given its technological superiority and massive research and development effort. Fear of external threat is so habitual and deeply embedded in the American psyche that political leaders continue to claim to be committed to making America stronger in order to be electable.

American military preponderance would matter little if the rest of the world could have confidence in American wisdom and restraint. The rest of the world would have nothing to fear if America were a benign sheriff, accepting the law itself and leading others to do the same. The policies and actions of the US during the Bush presidency have severely corroded such confidence. Even if Bush is defeated and Kerry elected, the rest of the world would not be able to automatically relax and presume restoration of global order. Bush has had majority support for much that he has done, and Kerry is using as a campaign theme ‘Together we can build a stronger America.’ Perhaps he does not mean that he wants a stronger military, but the slogan is ambiguous for good reason, to appeal to as wide a range of people as possible. Yet, a majority of Americans also want a stronger UN. There were massive public protests before the illegal invasion of Iraq. The majority of Americans prefer that their country act legally, collaboratively and responsibly – though political leaders do not always represent their constituents’ views.

The dominance of the military also leads to the question of whether existing forms of civilian government are adequate for its governance. David Calleo, Professor and Director of European Studies at the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, writes that ‘America’s huge military power, combined with a growing predisposition for global dominance among American elites, forms a concentrated element of central power that is alarmingly asymmetrical within America’s traditional federal checks and balances.’

Massive increases in spending on sophisticated weapons are mostly irrelevant to combating terrorism. A reviewer remarked wittily ‘To fight today’s terrorism with an army is like trying to shoot a cloud of mosquitoes with a machine gun.’ Terrorists are mobile parasites: just as control of disease requires international cooperation so does the crime of terrorism. Nor is America made more secure by spending as much on the military as all the rest of the world put together, for that provokes rather than reassures. The central issue is not how to fight wars better, but how to establish and apply the principles of justice and democratic participation and so reduce despair.

v. Nine Eleven: the Defining Moment
... for security against terrorism we need, most of all, cooperative international intelligence and law enforcement activities, not bold attacks by a powerful military.\textsuperscript{55} 

Philip B. Heymann

The morning of September 11 was the defining moment of George W. Bush’s presidency. When hundreds of millions of people saw the television replays of United Airlines Flight 175 banking and accelerating into the South Tower of the World Trade Center the world-view of every one of us changed forever. It was the most publicised and shocking terrorist act we had seen. Grief was worldwide (though not universal) often expressed with great empathy. For example, \textit{Le Monde} famously headlined \textit{Nous sommes tous Américains}, We are all Americans; at Buckingham Palace the band at the Changing of the Guard played the Star Spangled Banner, the first time a foreign country’s national anthem had been played at this ceremony; in Iran thousands held candlelight vigils; and millions attended religious services and public rallies in many countries. Daalder and Lindsay report that ‘In the view of Bush and his advisers, this outpouring of sympathy reflected the fact that as much as other countries might dislike specific US policies, they understood that the United States is a uniquely just and beneficent great power.’\textsuperscript{56}

The terrorist attacks and the turbulence of the following days evoked the same grief and anxiety amongst UN diplomats and staff as amongst their New York neighbours. Spouses worked in the World Trade Center; children went to the same schools as those who lost parents; tens of thousands of workers, many covered with dust, streamed up First Avenue past the UN as they walked home. The UN buildings were evacuated because Al-Qaeda had threatened to blow them up too. The Security Council passed a resolution condemning terrorism on 12 September and Kofi Annan spoke emotionally to a packed meeting of delegates and staff in the General Assembly Chamber on Thursday 13\textsuperscript{th}. There was a general expectation that such a disaster must generate a cooperative, multilateral response.

Terrorist attacks are monstrous crimes against innocent people. Terrorism is a widely dispersed threat, for during the last decade terrorists have caused carnage in cities as different as Baghdad and Belfast, Casablanca and Colombo, Denpasar and Istanbul, London and Madrid, Mombasa and Moscow, Nairobi and New York, Riyadh and Tokyo – to list only some of the most publicised. A variety of fanatical groups with different grievances has been responsible, most operating across borders. It follows that international cooperation is required to combat them, including sharing intelligence, coordinated law enforcement, surveillance of suspects, penetration of potentially conspiratorial cells and groups, monitoring their communications and the tracking of their finances. Military action is not the principal part of the solution. Terrorists are rarely state-based. Defeating the Taliban or Saddam Hussein does not eradicate terrorism. Painstaking, unspectacular, long-term police and security work are much likelier to produce eventual results than any action by bombs or tanks.
Philip Heymann, a Harvard law professor and former Deputy Attorney General of the United States, writes that: ‘Even small-scale terrorism possesses an almost magical ability to produce fear, anxiety, anger, and a demand for vigorous action in a sizable portion of a country’s population.’ The dramatic upsurge in expressions of American nationalism – flags on most dwellings, in most suit lapels and on many vehicles, national songs at the end of every church service, utter patriotic conformity in all public expressions of opinion – demonstrated the pervasiveness and intensity of these reactions in America. Governments have to respond to such emotional outbursts by demonstrating determination to minimise the threat through decisive action. This does not mean, however, that only one approach is feasible.

On September 12, Bush spoke nationally from the Cabinet room and described the attacks ‘as an act of war … in a monumental struggle between good and evil.’ There was a debate in Washington about whether America’s response should be a war against Al-Qaeda and its Afghani hosts, or a broader struggle against terrorists wherever they were. A war cabinet met at Camp David at the weekend to discuss alternatives. Amongst the proposals, George Tenet, Director of the CIA, ‘laid out a span of covert activity around the globe, including plots and assassinations – a plan to neutralize people disposed against the U.S. government by any means necessary. At its core was an enabling provision that there be virtually no civilian oversight.’ On the Monday, Bush authorised this plan. He announced ‘Our war with terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end … until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.’ This is an immense task. He said in his West Point speech in June 2002 that ‘We must uncover terror cells in 60 or more countries, using every tool of finance, intelligence, and law enforcement.’

While electorally appealing, the metaphor of a ‘War on Terrorism,’ is misleading, for it implies that the way to counteract terrorism is military action against states. Yet terrorism is a technique for inducing fear, of terrifying people through examples of killing, not the name of an enemy. Terror is an emotion. The enemy are ‘ruthless Islamic totalitarians,’ to use Joschka Fischer’s phrase, in Europe and the Middle East as well as America. Terrorists are partisan militias who are not usually state-based. War cannot be waged against an abstract noun.

The Administration’s public statements gave too little indication of serious analysis of the terrorists’ motivations and goals. Bush’s repeated comment that ‘They want to destroy our freedoms’ was not even persuasive as a simplification and was derisory as propaganda. Terrorists use violence and the threat of further destruction as a means of forcing change. The core aim of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism is establishment of fundamentalist Islamic regimes throughout the Muslim world, with top priority for Saudi Arabia. Richard Clarke writes that the ‘international movement’s goal is the creation of a network of governments, imposing on their citizens a minority interpretation of Islam. … The ‘Caliphate’ they seek to create would be a severe and repressive fourteenth-century literalist theocracy.’ Jessica Stern, who has interviewed religious terrorists of many kinds including anti-abortion crusaders in the US, Hamas leaders and militants in Pakistan and Indonesia, concludes that their beliefs are fuelled
not only by inspirational leaders but also by poverty, repression and a sense of humiliation.\textsuperscript{61}

If this is correct, a serious engagement with counter-terrorism would involve both a major, international counter-terrorist military and police effort to find and arrest the criminals, and sustained upgrading of the strategy and resources allocated to economic and social development, encouragement of the evolution of more democratic systems of government everywhere and concerted attempts to resolve conflicts.

A sophisticated, multifaceted strategy is required. Gareth Evans, Australian Foreign Minister for eight years and now President and Chief Executive of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, has advocated an international strategy for combating terrorism that would include five parts applied simultaneously: homeland defence; pursuit and punishment of terrorists; action within countries of origin, supported, whenever sought, from outside; addressing the political repression and exclusion that causes grievances; and addressing the underlying social, economic and cultural issues that cause injustice, poverty and despair.\textsuperscript{62,63} It is crucial to avoid any action that could have net costs by strengthening the motivation or capacity of potential terrorists. Such costs can be both physical and intangible. Actions must be sustainable for the long term since the terrorist threat could continue for decades, and this requires that they be consistent with established civil liberties. But it is important to recognise that even a concerted campaign on these lines, however intrinsically beneficial in its effects, would satisfy those Islamic fundamentalist leaders whose principal aim is the establishment of fundamentalist regimes in (especially) Saudi Arabia and ultimately throughout the Muslim world and perhaps beyond.

The conditions that breed terrorism have received too little attention. Understanding the countries of origin of terrorists requires deep local knowledge, patience and recognition that external assistance is appropriate only when locally requested and under local control. The American ‘Greater Middle East Initiative,’ which was prepared in Washington without consultation with Arab nations and leaked to the media before it had been discussed with them, was obviously misjudged. The so-called initiative aimed to promote political freedom, equality for women, access to education and greater economic openness. Fine goals, but Arab countries accurately perceived this as an external plan to impose change. President Mubarak of Egypt described the proposal as ‘delusional.’ The suspicion formed immediately that this was yet another way of delaying American engagement in attempting a settlement between Israel and Palestine. The only action which the US Administration could take which would demonstrate effectively to Arab nations a serious interest in political freedom in the Middle East would be genuine even handedness over Palestine and Israel. Democracy cannot be established from outside. Nationals know best for their own countries, not Americans. External assistance can only be of greatest value when requested. Yet America is now spending forty times as much on the military as on development assistance and much of that goes to Israel and Egypt, and some of the rest to Security Council member states or other countries whose support the US is seeking.
While it is essential to take the terrorist threat seriously and for governments to act with proper responsibility and caution, there has been exaggeration about the extent of the danger that has intensified fear and hysteria. Sociologist at the University of Southern California, Professor Barry Glassner, wrote prophetically in 1999 that ‘America is a country gripped by fear.’ In a perceptive book, he writes about the national tendency to exaggerate fears, and lists amongst those mistakenly inflated crime, drug use, minorities, teenage pregnancies, and various diseases. Media exaggeration amplifies the fears, he says. Reasons he identifies as underlying selection of particular dangers for hysterical exaggeration include infringement of basic moral principles; because they facilitate criticism of disliked groups or institutions; projection of deep-seated personal or social anxieties, especially those due to society’s failure to address particular problems. Terrorism is now America’s most exaggerated fear. ‘America cannot at once be as powerful as it boasts and as vulnerable as it fears,’ writes political scientist Benjamin Barber. The Administration has been explicitly inflating the fear of terrorists. The eminent *Washington Post* journalist E. J. Dionne comments that Bush’s slogan seems to be ‘The only thing we have to fear is the loss of fear itself.’

Combating terrorism has become an obsession for many parts of the Administration. ‘Anti-terrorism has become the animating principle of nearly every aspect of American public policy. It informs how we fund scientific research, whose steel or textiles we buy, who may enter or leave the country, and how we sort our mail,’ writes Luke Mitchell. But not of the choice of country to fight, for the war on Iraq involved ignoring the threat of al-Qaeda. The long-term chief of counterterrorism, Richard Clarke, for example, accuses the Administration of both neglecting al-Qaeda and of starting ‘an unnecessary and costly war in Iraq that strengthened the fundamentalist, radical Islamic terrorist movement worldwide,’ which left America more vulnerable to future attacks.

Difficult judgements are required about the extent of security arrangements and the level of expenditure on them, not least because finance and personnel are finite and choices are always required. Those choices require tough assessment about the probability of risk and the potential effectiveness of additional security arrangements. For example, terrorists killed no Americans in 2000; in 2001, 2,973 were killed by the bombers and five by anthrax. There were no deaths from terrorism in America in 2002 or 2003. This is not a war of the twentieth century type, in which tens of millions died. By contrast, in 2001, 43,000 Americans were killed in road accidents, 30,000 committed suicide, 700,000 died of heart disease and 554,000 from cancer. So what improvements in delivery of health or security services would contribute most to making Americans safer? This is not the place to attempt to answer that question: rather, the point is to suggest that cost-effectiveness must have a place in assessing what policies to adopt to combat terrorism. Glasser writes that ‘We had better learn to doubt our inflated fears before they destroy us. Valid fears have their place; they cue us to danger. False and over-drawn fears only cause hardship and the misdirection of scarce resources, as he goes on to show.’
The ‘war on terrorism’ has more significance than just misjudged political rhetoric and spending priorities. The Administration has treated the whole world as a battleground and anyone captured as an ‘enemy combatant’ who is not entitled to civil rights. Within six weeks of September 11 the Administration rushed through Congress a bill with the Newspeak title ‘Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism,’ abbreviated to The Patriot Act. Some of the provisions erode previously entrenched civil liberties. For example, it allows government agents to search an individual’s private business, educational and other personal data including bookstore receipts and library records, without notifying the suspect or certifying that he is under surveillance.

It also allows the Attorney General to suspend the right of habeas corpus for citizens he considers a security risk. Observers report 5,000 detentions in the US in the first couple of years after 9/11, few charged with terrorism, kept incommunicado for months, their names were not publicly available, and many initially not allowed access to lawyers or their families. These repressive measures were initially limited to aliens but later applied to citizens too. Freedom to enter the US is being tightly constrained. Visitors are being finger printed and photographed. The access of foreign students to US schools and universities is being restricted. Some refugees and asylum seekers were detained. Yet such measures do little if anything to improve security and some argue that they ‘amount to a power grab by a paranoid, power-hungry government.’

John Ashcroft, the Attorney-General, has approved changes to legislation and regulation that permit trials of suspects by military tribunals, holding deportation hearings in secret, deporting suspects to countries where torture is routine and holding around 650 men who were arrested during the war in Afghanistan and elsewhere at Guantánomo Bay, Cuba without charge for years or access to lawyers. The same neglect of human rights is occurring in Iraq where an estimated 9,000 or so people have disappeared into detention and in Afghanistan where there are over 1,000 detentions.

Governments must confront terrorism, but better targeting is possible. Despite its rhetoric, the US is not at war when combating terrorism: it is engaged in a complex struggle to bring ruthless criminals to justice and to counteract the forces motivating terrorism and providing fertile soil for its recruiters. Accuracy in the metaphor would contribute to greater analytical clarity and action that is more effective. It is vital to combat terrorism but to do so in targeted and more sustainable ways, not by wildly flailing around in ways that disregard human rights, squander resources, and antagonize friends. Refusing to consult Congress, the courts or allies strengthens the anger of opponents, increasing the danger of terrorism. The Vulcans and their neo-conservative colleagues are also using the ‘war on terrorism’ to justify the massive expansion of military power for which they have long aspired. John Kiesling, the State Department officer who resigned shortly before the start of the American invasion of Iraq, described Bush’s policies as ‘incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. … Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security.’
Briefly summarising, despite having the least legitimacy to govern in American history, the Bush Administration has revolutionised international relations. Unilateralism and pre-emption have replaced the disciplines of diplomacy and negotiation, observance of international treaty obligations, containment, and deterrence. Assertive militarism has superseded international cooperation with its shared norms, treaties, and institutions. The Vulcans use overwhelming military power to justify American domination and manipulation of global affairs. It is as if having this one form of power is alone sufficient reason to rule the world. Yet the threats faced by the US are not principally military.

The contradictions in this strategy are clear: a necessary condition for combating terrorism is international cooperation in gathering intelligence, enforcing laws, capturing criminals, and easing the conditions that motivate terrorists and facilitate their recruitment. The supremacists have a counter productive strategy. Multilateralism is as necessary for the safety and security of Americans as of the rest of the world. Yet the assertive dominance of the Vulcans’ tactics has antagonised most of the rest of the world, reducing willingness to cooperate. The Administration’s hubris leads to increasing hostility. The trauma of the September 11 bombings so frightened Americans that debate about this strategy collapsed and was slow to revive, but as time goes by the consequences are becoming clearer, are articulated more openly, and opposition is growing. The eminent economist, Jeffrey Sachs, has written that ‘President George W. Bush is presiding over the ruin of U. S. foreign policy. … [His Administration’s policy] groaned under the weight of extremism, cynicism, ignorance and the obsession over Iraq.’ The second Iraq war is the clearest example of this militarist strategy and its consequences.
Distinctive Sources of American Foreign Policy

i. Chosen People in the Promised Land

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The Declaration of Independence

It is tempting to regard the Bush revolution as just the stance of a particularly doctrinaire Administration, but aspects of American tradition and social attitudes have been an enabling environment. While the character of the Bush Administration is the most powerful determinant of current US international policies, it is also important to recognise the underlying forces within American society that – almost – elected Bush to the Presidency and to which he has successfully appealed for support. This involves more than influences on the 2000 election. US foreign policy is the outcome of a struggle between diverse domestic interests and ideologies, perhaps more than is normal in other countries where foreign affairs departments are sometimes decisive. American society is large, diverse, complex, and unique. Two commentators on the role of the US in the UN Security Council write ‘US foreign policy … is the product of the interplay among internal ideologies, constituencies, and political agendas that are not only at odds with one another over the proper response to any given situation but also change configuration over time.’

A necessary condition for other nations looking for means of cooperation is to recognise the impediments within the US by attempting to understand the underlying social forces at work.

An article in The New York Times argued this explicitly. Roger Cohen wrote ‘Mr Bush cannot be distinguished from America. He has the support of roughly half the United States. … This America believes it is doing God’s will in fighting for freedom. It equates pacifism with decline. It supports the death penalty, low taxes and the right to bear arms. It is sceptical of subtle arguments, wondering what they mean. It holds that action is American and that failure to support the president in wartime is un-American. … Of course, there is another big slice of America … that loathes Mr Bush.’

Idealism has combined with potent national myths to establish a powerful American national identity. The outstanding American political sociologist, Seymour Martin Lipset, writes ‘Born out of revolution, the United States is a country organized around an ideology …’ Lipset quotes G. K. Chesterton ‘America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence.’ The distinctive elements in American exceptionalism have led to two quite different approaches to foreign policy: the sense of redeeming mission to the rest of the world; and to isolationism, because the rest of the world is corrupt and the US is best to keep itself free of other countries’ quarrels. The following discussion relates principally to the first of these, since America’s sense of calling to lead the world has been so influential since World War II.
President Lincoln eloquently elaborated the principles of the Declaration of Independence in his brief address at the dedication of the cemetery for the 3,700 American soldiers killed while fighting each other who are buried at Gettysburg. His first and last sentences were:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. …
It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us … that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

These strong values and goals were the product of America’s history. The Puritans who started to settle in Massachusetts in 1620 left oppression in England to seek freedom to live and worship as they believed God wanted. John Winthrop, the first governor of the Colony, preached that the settlers had entered into a Covenant with God. That covenant meant that ‘wee must be knit together in this worke as one man, … we must delight in each other, make others Condicions our owne, rejoyce together, mourne together, labour and suffer together, allways having before our eyes our Commission and Community … wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us.’ They thought of themselves as a people chosen to exemplify a new, pure form of Christian obedience. Like the Israelites leaving Egypt, they were a chosen people who had crossed a sea to a promised land.

For all the European settlers, not just the Puritans, America was a new world. Colin Calloway, Professor of History at Dartmouth College, writes ‘America was more than just a place; it was a second opportunity for humanity – a chance, after the bloodlettings and the pogroms, the plagues and the famines, the political and religious wars, the social and economic upheavals, for Europeans to get it right this time.’ Richard Hughes, distinguished professor of religion at Pepperdine University, explains ‘The Puritans told a focused, compelling, and convincing story that no other immigrant group could match. Immigrants from … many parts of the world … found this story immensely compelling and adopted it as if it were their own. In this way, the myth of the Chosen Nation became a permanent part of the American consciousness.’

Herman Melville, author of Moby-Dick, which some literary scholars regard as the greatest novel written in English, wrote in 1850 in White-Jacket:

And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of out time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. … God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours. …
Long enough have we been skeptics with regard to ourselves, and doubted whether, indeed, the political Messiah had come. But he has come in us, if we would but give utterance to his promptings. And let us always remember that with ourselves, almost for the first time in the history of earth, national selfishness is unbounded philanthropy; for we can not do a good to America but we give alms to the world.\(^78\)

Every sentence in that long quotation expresses a part of the foundation of America’s contemporary civic religion. It is astounding to perceive the hubris involved in imagining one’s nation to be the political Messiah. Frederick Merk, former Professor of American History at Harvard University describes this view. ‘… the Goddess of Liberty holding aloft her light to the world seemed to Americans to be, in reality, themselves.’\(^79\) This is another powerful national myth, which evolved during the revolutionary period from 1776 to 1825. The prevailing philosophy at that time was the Enlightenment, which valued the power of reason and contributed to development of the natural sciences. Many leaders of the Enlightenment were Deists who believed there was a God but not in many other orthodox Christian doctrines. They considered that God revealed himself not only through the Christian tradition but also through nature, and that nature expressed the natural order of things.

Most of the founding fathers such as Jefferson (there were no mothers) believed in some form of deism. They considered it only a modest extension of their beliefs to regard the American nation as an expression of the natural order of things. Out of the self-confidence which came from believing they were God’s chosen people grew the idea that American society was ordered in the natural way. They were nature’s nation. Many European Americans came to consider their own political, economic, and cultural forms as the most inspired and natural and became evangelists for them.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, the concept of being a Chosen People lost the essential original component of having responsibilities for neighbours, and evolved instead into the notion of divine favouritism. America was ‘God’s Own Country.’\(^80\) Some national leaders tried to re-emphasise responsibilities, most notably Lincoln in his second inaugural address, in which he made clear that to claim divine favouritism for one’s own cause or nation (as both sides were doing in the Civil War) is presumptuous in the extreme. Nevertheless, the conception that God had chosen America for power, privilege, and to lead the rest of the world has seemed to many Americans to be beyond dispute. President George W. Bush has even said that he believes God is on America’s side in the ‘war on terrorism.’ When asked in one of the TV debates during the 2004 presidential primaries whether they shared this view, both John Kerry and John Edwards rejected the idea, Edwards by quoting Lincoln’s reply to a similar question by saying that the issue is rather whether America is on God’s side.

The Great Seal of the United States (printed on the back of the one-dollar note) encapsulates the myth of divine favouritism and a second myth that grew from it as well. The seal shows the eye of God looking down on an unfinished pyramid growing out of
desert sands. The Latin inscription at the top is ‘ANNUIT COEPTIS’ which means ‘He (God) has favoured our undertakings.’ The inscription at the base of the picture is ‘NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM’ or ‘A new order of the ages.’ As chosen people in God’s own country, many Americans thought it was self-evident that they would lead the rest of the world into a golden age of freedom, peace, justice and democracy. President Woodrow Wilson was convinced that America’s destiny was ‘to show the way to the nations of the world how they shall walk in the paths of liberty … It was of this that we dreamed at our birth.’ President George Bush Senior expressed this idea when he spoke of a ‘new world order’ after the collapse of the Soviet Union. ‘And the ideals that have spawned new freedoms throughout the world have received their boldest and clearest expression in our great country the United States. Never before has the world looked more to the American example.’

Democrats, too, are not immune from mobilising echoes of those myths for their own contemporary purposes. Political analyst Stanley Greenberg writes ‘Like Kennedy, the United States seeks to lead the world, but its power is greatly multiplied by the admiration of people all across the world for our historic role in promoting freedom.’ Reinhold Niebuhr, who many regard as the greatest American theologian in the twentieth century and an outstanding political philosopher, published a splendid reflection on these themes in 1952 entitled The Irony of American History. In it, he writes that:

‘Whether our nation interprets its spiritual heritage through Massachusetts [the New England puritans] or Virginia [Deism and Jeffersonianism], we came into existence with the sense of being a “separated” nation, which God was using to make a new beginning for mankind. … We were God’s American Israel. … We find it almost as difficult as the communists to believe that anyone could think ill of us, since we are as persuaded as they that our society is so essentially virtuous that only malice could prompt criticism of any of our actions. Every nation has its own version of spiritual pride. … Our version is that our nation turned its back upon the vices of Europe and made a new beginning.’

ii. Manifest Destiny and the Myth of Innocence

Completely faithful to ‘the laws of Nature and Nature’s God’ … and completely unique in the history of the world, [America] had every right to extend its influence not only by example, but also by force – first throughout the North American continent, and then around the world.

Richard T. Hughes

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Americans considered that self-protection required maintenance of a sphere of influence. The Munroe doctrine proclaimed America’s right to intervene anywhere in Latin America, to prevent European
countries doing so. They generally perceived their role of leadership towards a golden age as involving setting a peaceful example.

In the 1840s, the idea of international leadership towards liberty evolved into the doctrine of manifest destiny. ‘It meant expansion, prearranged by Heaven, over an area not clearly defined. In some minds it meant expansion over the region to the Pacific; in others, over the North American continent; in others, over the hemisphere,’ writes Professor Merk. It was the natural order of things, ‘our manifest destiny to overspread and possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative self-government entrusted to us,’ wrote the author of the phrase. It was America’s manifest destiny to extend the area of liberty to its natural boundaries by incorporating not only Texas but also California, Oregon and Canada into the Union. It was also the duty of America to regenerate backward peoples.

The originators of the concept did not envisage acquisition of territory by conquest; they thought states entered the Union by choice. However, in 1846 manifest destiny became a rationalisation for conquest. President Polk sought an excuse for war with Mexico until an incident enabled him to claim, with the support of Congress, that America had been ‘forced’ by the gross wrongs and outrages suffered from Mexico, to go to war. The idea was soon widely accepted that it would be reasonable compensation from Mexico for California to join the US. New Mexico would also have to join the Union to ensure access between the East and West of the country. In any case, America was bringing peace. “Conquest” which carries peace into a land where the sword has always been the sole arbiter … which institutes the reign of law [etc] … must be a great blessing to the conquered,’ wrote the Boston Times. American leaders believed that they had the responsibility to not only lead by example, but also to conquer the rest of the continent, and that this could require military action. The American invasion of Mexico advanced as far as Mexico City. The victors required the Mexicans to relinquish what became the American states of Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and California. President Polk acquiesced to the more formidable British and agreed on the current frontier with Canada.

There was fierce debate within America about this aggression. The poet Walt Whitman thought ‘it was for the interest of mankind that the power and influence of the United States should be extended, “the farther the better”,’ Some who acknowledged that war was regrettable nevertheless thought it was necessary to fulfil the manifest destiny of the United States to take over Mexico’s northern lands. Others, especially in New England, thought the Southerner’s naked grab for territory was obscene. This argument was amongst the disputes underlying the Civil War.

The Civil War was the first violent industrialised conflict: it was technically feasible to arm, supply, and repeatedly move enormous armies. Without the railways, the South might have won. About 359,000 Union soldiers and 258,000 Confederates died either on the battlefield or in hospital, more Americans than have been killed in any other war and a far higher proportion of the population than were killed in any war in the
twentieth century. The superb Ken Burns/National Public Television series on the Civil War and more recently the film *Mystic Mountain* have been potent reminders of the barbarities of the war about slavery. There was incalculable damage to American society, from which it has not yet completely recovered.

The history of racism shatters the myth of being ‘a light on a hill.’ Racism is not one of many dilemmas in the US; it is the defining contradiction of US history. Slavery and the racism it produced expose the shallowness and narrowness of the national commitment to the ideals of liberty and democracy. Despite the struggle for civil rights, racism continues in innumerable ways. It is difficult to exaggerate the damage of habitual discrimination and exploitation to the spirit of generations of African-Americans, or to the harmony of American society.

Westward expansion generated the frontier myth: that the conquest of the ‘wilderness,’ the defeat of the Indians, and the opening up of vast lands was the foundation for the expanding economy. Violence was central to the development of the frontier. A major history of the frontier myth by Richard Slotkin is entitled *Gunfighter Nation*. He writes ‘The Anglo-American colonies grew by displacing Amerindian societies and enslaving Africans to advance the fortunes of White colonists. As a result, the ‘savage war’ became a characteristic episode of each phase of westward expansion.’

The bloody wars between European and Native Americans were an integral feature of the expansion of the frontier. No reader is likely to need convincing of the extent of the Indians’ death by disease, of the European Americans’ deceitful trickery or of the horror of the bloody slaughter or of the Indian retaliation. The doctrine of manifest destiny was used to justify extermination of Native American peoples in most of the country. Yet historian Hugh Brogan concludes that ‘… as time has passed, more and more white Americans have come to see the folly and loathe the evil of this legacy of violence …’

Western films, one of America’s gifts to the imagination of the world, celebrate the exploits of the frontier pioneers. *High Noon*, the most popular western film in America, exemplifies the frontier culture of violence and individualistic justice. In it, the sheriff, a courageous loner, brings justice to an anarchic town, a myth that has contemporary salience for the global sheriff. A second image is of the cowboy as a quiet, self-contained man who carried a gun to protect himself, his cattle, and others if necessary. His honour rested on his refusal to shoot first, as exemplified in *Shane* – another popular western – and in *High Noon*. That ethic, of shooting only after being shot at, is betrayed by the bullying doctrine of pre-emption. A third mythical figure is that of the outlaw. Lewis Lapham, editor of *Harpers*, writes ‘…I suspect that President Bush owes his standing in the opinion polls to our equally American inclination to make the criminal and the outlaw figures of romance. Whether cast as the hero or the villain of the tale, the man at ease with violence bends the rules to fit the circumstance, certain that his always noble ends justify his sometimes less than noble means.’
There was little interest in territorial expansion during the decades after the Civil War. However, as the economy matured and the era of ready access to new fertile land ended, expansion again became attractive, especially to Republicans, as a means for opening new markets. As in mid-century, the postulates of the advocates ‘were the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon peoples over all others and the obligation of the superiors to give leadership to the inferiors,’ (Merk). The value of the Hawaiian Islands as a way station to Asia was recognised and the American government readily responded to the planters’ manipulations by annexation. After an American naval ship was blown up in Havana Harbour President McKinley declared war on Spain (regardless of whether Spain was responsible) swift victories were won in sea battles off Cuba and the Philippines and a treaty signed with Spain in which sovereignty over Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam was handed to the US. America fought a devastating war to suppress a Filipino insurrection in which a fifth of the population died from injury or disease. This introduced a new principle of annexing peoples not candidates for equal statehood in the Union. America had become imperialist. A gradual reaction gave Cuba conditional independence in 1901. A new treaty under Roosevelt withdrew all US special rights, other than the lease of the Guantánamo Naval Base. In accordance with plans made in 1935, the Philippine Republic became a free nation in 1946.

Manifest destiny, as an ideological construct, and imperialism as a later practical outcome, were responses to economic and political pressures in the mid-1840s and 1899. The attempt to justify these responses, by the fundamental American sense of having a special role in the world, was unconvincing to many people even then. The lesson for the rest of the world is that America’s sense of national mission can be dangerous because it may be readily perverted. Belief in superiority, racial or national, is dangerous hubris. This is a danger of all nationalism, but the potential cost to the world is greatest when the country is as militarily dominant as the US.

The myth of innocence grew during the First and Second World Wars, when Americans intervened to support a fight against aggressors and bring peace to Europe, the Pacific and the world. Bush has appropriated this tradition, claiming that America’s motives are pure and recognised as such by others, because it wants only to spread freedom, prosperity, and peace. In February 2003 he spoke of the Administration’s policy as being ‘God’s gift to every human being in the world,’ and of how America had been ‘called’ to lead the world to peace. When Bush talks of the ‘war against terrorism’ as the battle between good and evil this resonates with many Americans, but the presumption of identifying America’s position as ‘good’ astonishes the rest of the world. He has been able to mobilise what Tony Judt, Professor of History at New York University, describes as ‘the narcissistic confidence of Americans in the superiority of American values and practices, and their rootless inattentiveness to history.’

The current extent of imprisonment is an astonishing example of a continuing culture of violence and coercion. The last decade has been the most punitive in American legal history, the result of ‘a highly efficient and technically controlled system of crime management directed almost exclusively at protecting crime’s potential victims instead of coping with the causes. Its principal instruments, inevitably, were swift arrest, tough
sentencing, and extensive incarceration. By 2002, the US prison population was 2,166,000. Since 1995, it has risen by 30 per cent. By the end of 2002, one in every 143 US residents was in prison. One in 20 of all American men and one in six African-American men have been prisoners at some point in their life. The growth in the number of prisoners has happened despite the sharp decline in the crime rate, even of violent crime. Unless trends change, 11 per cent of all American boys born in 2001 will go to jail in their lifetime. Two-thirds of ex-prisoners are re-arrested within three years of their release. The US has about 700 inmates per 100,000 residents compared with fewer than 100 per 100,000 in Germany, Italy, and Denmark.

The reason is legislation aimed at repressing crime, such as the ‘three strikes and you’re out’ laws. One Californian, whose sentence the Supreme Court upheld, got 25 years to life for shoplifting three golf clubs. A quarter of all the prisoners in the world are in the US. Within the prisons, there is little interest in rehabilitation and even less in health care. Two thirds of prisoners have hepatitis and most receive no treatment. About 600,000 ex-prisoners return to the community each year, sometimes with little skill, no place to live and few family connections. Finding employment is difficult and in many states they cannot borrow, get a drivers licence, vote, or rent public housing. Second chance programs are seriously under-funded.

A final indicator of the tradition of violence in America is the extent of gun ownership. There are over 220 million firearms in the US in a population of 270 million, 0.82 guns per person. Thirty-four per cent of voters own guns; in fact 19 per cent have three or more in their homes. In comparison, there are just over two million private firearms in Australia, 0.11 guns per person. A perceptive observer of America, Jonathan Raban, describes a Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade with its ‘idyllic version of American history’ and suggests that a Martian would note ‘that this was a revolutionary nation, in which the gun was an entirely happy symbol of selfhood and independence.’ The electoral power of the National Rifle Association is legendary but, as Michael Moore demonstrated in Bowling for Columbine, there is also strong, committed support for control of gun ownership.

On the day this section was being written, in a rural retreat on the edge of the Berkshire Hills about 150 kilometres north of New York City, surrounded by farmland, woods and secondary growth, there was no peace because of the repeatedly shattering noise of gunfire. The gun club had apparently released some of the pheasants and chukars they breed, and were out shooting them. This happens regularly in all states, according to the superb, recently published Sibley Guide to Birds. (This field guide sold half a million copies in the year after it was released, indicating the extent of the growing interest in the more peaceful rural activity of bird watching.) In season, the shooters also go after deer and wild turkey. The noise of shooting is the only negative feature of a lovely area.

Is the threshold of violence lower in the US than in other countries? If so, has this contributed to a greater willingness to use the military to achieve diplomatic goals than in other countries? It is difficult to answer those questions fairly. There is certainly
a tradition of violence in the US, including domestic violence, as there is in all countries. Slotkin writes that there is enough actual violence ‘... the Indian wars, the slave trade, “lynch laws” and race riots, the labor/management violence of 1880-1920, and our current high levels of domestic and criminal violence – to support the belief that America has been a peculiarly violent nation.’\textsuperscript{108} He argues that what makes America unique is not the level of violence, but the mythic significance that violence has been given and the political uses to which the myths have been put. Some even see violence as having regenerative capacity, a thought echoed in the contemporary notion of the military being the principal institution within which the young will learn discipline and to serve their country. For one nation to be spending half of all the world’s military expenditure does suggest that there are peculiarities about the US.

In 2002, a passionate critique of violence published in New York had the shocking title \textit{War is a force that gives us meaning}. In it, journalist Chris Hedges argues eloquently that

\begin{quote}
The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug … It is peddled by mythmakers … It dominates culture, distorts memory, corrupts language, and infects everything around it … War exposes the capacity for evil that lurks not far below the surface in all of us. … War is a crusade. President George W. Bush is not shy about warning other nations that they stand with the United States in the war on terrorism or will be counted with those that defy us. This too is a jihad. … We have embarked on a campaign as quixotic as the one mounted to destroy us.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

\textit{iii. Economic Power, Interdependence and Constraints}

We are living in a new Gilded Age, as extravagant as the original.\textsuperscript{110}  
Paul Krugman

The doctrine of manifest destiny grew from both the ideological heritage of the emerging nation and the drive for economic expansion. After conquest of the west was completed, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner transformed American’s self-understanding with a paper arguing that the closing of the old frontier and the delay in finding a new one was causing an economic and political crisis. His frontier thesis powerfully influenced economic and political ideology throughout the twentieth century. For example, the central theme of John F. Kennedy’s inaugural presidential address was ‘a new frontier.’ ‘I stand today facing west on what was once the last frontier. … we stand today on the edge of a new frontier … a frontier of unknown opportunities and paths, a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats …’

This is not the place for an analysis of the causes of American economic dynamism during the twentieth century. Through a combination of: rich natural resources; entrepreneurial energy; investment; scientific and technological dynamism; relatively well judged, growth-oriented and stabilising economic policies, improved
education, health and infrastructure; freedom from war on the US mainland; assertion of its interests internationally; investment from overseas; immigration of skilled people; and no doubt other factors, the US ended the century with not only the largest economy in human history but also one of ten highest average incomes per head. Its relative position has been declining, for after World War II America produced about half of global output and this is now down to about a quarter.

In 2001, US national income totalled just over $10 trillion, which was a third of global income in that year, more than the sum of the gross national incomes of the next four largest economies – Japan, Germany, the UK, and France. By 2003 GDP had grown to $10.8 trillion but because of the devaluation of the dollar US GDP had fallen to just over a quarter of global income. American income per head is the second highest in the world, after Luxemburg. Residents of the US own a third of the global value of stocks, and the US is the base of a third of the 100 largest non-financial companies. Such size gives the US great international economic power. Of course, this power does not always lead to consistent or even effective policies. There are serious contradictions in American trade policy, for example. While continuing to argue for ‘free trade,’ tight protection and high subsidies are maintained or strengthened for agriculture, forestry and favoured manufacturing and service industries. As well, negotiation of bilateral trade agreements undermines the multilateral trade strategy of America’s child, the World Trade Organization.

The appearance of global economic dominance is misleading because there are major interdependencies between America and the rest of the world and growing crises. American household savings are negligible, the current account deficit is high, and so there is extraordinary dependence on capital inflows from the rest of the world. Inequality is exploding. Some social indicators are closer to those of developing than other developed countries. And there is a crisis in corporate ethics. A brief comment on each of these five issues follows. As well, what Christian Reus-Smit calls ‘the mystique of America’s material power’ is misleading, for ‘material power alone is insufficient to deliver sustained and effective political influence in the contemporary world order … [and] far less conducive to American hegemony than after the Second World War.’

First, America is dependent on capital imports. In 1999 and 2000, America received more than 60 per cent of total net global capital exports, and though the proportions have been lower from 2001-3, the US continues to attract a far larger volume of financial flows than any other country. America is dependent on Europe, Japan, China, and other smaller East Asian countries to balance its external account. If any of those countries decided to withdraw their funds or simply to cease investing in the US, the dollar would rapidly devalue, prices in the US would rise, interest rates would be increased, and growth squashed. In effect, the rest of the world pays for most American investment at present. The US is now the most indebted country. Foreigners have more invested in the US than does the US in the rest of the world.

Second, inequality is growing rapidly. Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic Democracy in America begins by remarking that ‘among the new things that attracted my
attention during my stay in the United States, none struck me more forcefully than the equality of conditions. How the situation has changed! During recent decades, a second Gilded Age has begun. In 2000, the richest 2.8 million Americans received $950 billion after taxes, 15.5 per cent of national income. In the same year, the poorest 110 million received 14.4 per cent of national income. In 2000, the average income after tax of the top one per cent was $863,000; more than triple their average income in 1979 after adjusting for inflation. The average income of the lowest 40 per cent of income earners was $21,000 in 2000, a 13 per cent increase since 1979.

One powerful reason for this growing injustice are the massive increases in executives' incomes. The average annual salary in America, expressed in 1998 dollars, rose from $32,522 in 1970 to $35,864 in 1999. That is about a 10 per cent increase over 29 years – progress, but not much. Over the same period, according to Fortune magazine, the average real annual compensation of the top 100 chief executive officers (CEO's) went from $1.3 million – 39 times the pay of the average worker – to $37.5 million, more than 1,000 times the pay of ordinary workers. The trend continued in 2003. This has set a stunning example of inequity and exploitation of power to the rest of the developed and developing world.

One reason there is not more pressure to address this gigantic injustice is the number of Americans who believe they are destined to become wealthy. Astonishingly, 19 per cent of the adult population believe they are amongst the richest one per cent, and a further 20 per cent think they will enter that one per cent during their lifetime.

Thirty-five million Americans live in poverty. Most of the adults who are poor are working, often full time. African-Americans and single women are disproportionately poor, but the poor are as diverse as the nation. They face ‘a constellation of difficulties,’ far more complex than just low incomes. Potentially effective programs such as job training, early childhood care, and remedial education are starved of funds. Remedial education alone is crucial since 14 per cent of American adults cannot find an intersection on a map, total a deposit slip, or determine the correct dose of a medication. What chance do they have of enrolling let alone of voting as they want?

Some American social indicators are amongst the worst amongst developed countries. America has higher rates of poverty, inequity, infant mortality, homicide, and HIV infection than other advanced democracies. A smaller proportion of the population have health insurance and life expectancy is lower. On a per capita basis, the United States emits considerably more greenhouse gases and produces more solid waste. The Bush Administration’s domestic economic and social policies have worsened most of these problems. The focus of Administration economic policies is on plutocrats and favoured corporations. The banner of compassionate conservatism has had little to do with actual policy. The characteristic stance has been to minimise restraints on corporations; provide limitless compassion for special interests such as corporate farms and energy companies; strengthen intrusive regulation of the citizenry; and squander finance on the military while starving the States of funds for human services and
infrastructure. Moral credibility has been destroyed by two regressive tax cuts, and economic credibility obliterated by the resulting massive increases in government debt.

Nowhere has the deterioration of ethical standards been more apparent than in parts of the corporate sector. Greedy CEOs are sufficient indication of a collapse of corporate ethics, though many Americans do not perceive them as such. Endless examples could be quoted, but just to give one, the chief executive of the New York Stock Exchange (a bureaucratic position with no entrepreneurial risk involved) received the staggering compensation of $140 million in cash ‘in deferred compensation, accrued savings and incentives’ four years before retirement. Public outrage was so great that he was sacked and those responsible for his compensation resigned. Nationally, though, the tide has not yet turned. The behaviour of the likes of Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, and Martha Stewart are more generally recognised as indicative of the corruption of even minimal standards of corporate probity. These and other companies benefited from what accounting firms called ‘aggressive accounting’ and others would call fraud.

Paul Krugman explains the most politically interesting example. In the late eighties George W. Bush was CEO of a tiny loss-making energy company that was bought by Harken Energy in return for board membership in Harken for Mr Bush and lots of company stock. Harken’s founder said the asset for which they were paying was the President’s son. Harken was also losing money, but in 1989 it was able to conceal this with the profits from selling a subsidiary, Aloha Petroleum, at a high price. Harken insiders purchased Aloha, with money mostly borrowed from Harken itself. Eventually the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) ruled that this was a phoney transaction and forced Harken to restate its 1989 earnings, causing the price of its shares to collapse. Not long before that ruling, Mr Bush sold off two-thirds of his stock, for $848,000. Though the law requires notification of such insider sales, Bush did not do so for 34 weeks. An internal SEC memo concluded that he had broken the law, but there was no action. As Krugman shows, Bush benefited from a fictitious asset sale at an artificially inflated price to a bogus buyer – as well as from being the President’s son. No further explanation is necessary for the Administration’s reluctance to tighten accounting and auditing law.

Some commentators are even arguing that the ‘corruption of US democracy is giving rise to a poorly supervised ruling class that will be less restrained in its use of force against other democracies, those in Europe included.’ While it may well be exaggerated to claim ‘that a rapacious clique of oligarchs has taken over US democracy,’ a more nuanced analysis would recognise the significance of corporate power in forming US trade, finance and industry policies and the impact of those on America’s international policies.

iv. Individualism and Solidarity
Community has warred incessantly with individualism for preeminence in our political hagiology.¹²⁵

Robert D. Putnam

Individualism is one of the principal features of American society. ‘The myth of rugged individualism continues to strike a powerful inner cord in the American psyche,’ writes eminent political scientist Robert Putnam. There is a strong emphasis on self-reliant individualism in American culture, business, and education. Personal achievement, competitiveness, rivalry, and self-promotion are constant themes of public discourse.

Despite the assertive – and passive – individualism of much American life there is often at the local community level a palpable sense of social solidarity, though that would not be how Americans normally name it. The panglossian *Economist* commented in a review of books on American society in 1999, that ‘the nation, at least as a community of interacting individuals, is strong and safe.’ Despite *The Economist*’s view that things are normally for the best, that is probably a fair summary: individualism is strong and can be abrasive, but there is at the same time, a surprising amount of cooperative interaction. Garrison Keilor is a gently satirical celebrant of the blend of competition and implicit cooperation in his archetypal Lake Wobegon.

Manhattan exemplifies the coexistence of aggressive individualism and social cooperation. Tolerable living and movement in congested spaces requires that the assertion of individual space be compromised by social thoughtfulness, for if it is not, intrusiveness becomes unbearable. Individual rights and freedoms are important, but there is also a considerable degree of kindness, generosity, and local solidarity. While living in Manhattan for eight years I have had no nasty experiences and many small examples of kindness and honesty. Like residents of most towns, New Yorkers often have pride in living there – if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.

A comment by Niebuhr is crucial ‘On the one hand, our culture does not value the individual as much as it pretends: on the other hand, if justice is to be maintained and our survival assured, we cannot make individual liberty as unqualifiedly the end of life as our ideology asserts.’¹²⁶ There may be implicit recognition of this in continuing American openness, neighbourliness, and generosity.

Perhaps more surprisingly, insecurity is one of the widespread, defining, underlying characteristics of Americans. Anxiety is as common as in most developed countries, but there may well be more to the pervasive sense of insecurity in America than that. Despite superficial self-confidence, Americans are often unsure of themselves and their country. The popularity of introspective psychological, sociological, and political analysis is one symptom, which Woody Allen’s films epitomise. The political themes of the cold war and the war on terror are surely another, of a different kind.

The national tendency to exaggerate fears is one of the clearest symptoms of national insecurity. Barry Glassner’s prophetic pre-9/11 book, *The Culture of Fear*,
mentioned in the second chapter, describes vividly the American tendency towards inflating their fears. The Salem witch-hunts and the McCarthy-led anti-communist hysteria are just the most publicised examples. ‘Quick-blooming xenophobia in times of stress’ is a second. The extent of gun ownership is surely a third symptom of insecurity, as well as of the tradition of violence. This is the central theme of Michael Moore’s compelling film *Bowling for Columbine*: that America is a violent society because of the perniciousness of Americans’ fears. Fear makes Americans more obedient and conformist, so the Bush regime has been only one that has opportunistically exaggerated fears of external threats.

Migration may increase insecurity, for emigrants leave their familiar though often not secure homes, and travel to a strange land where they hope that the potential rewards may be great, but probably suspect that the risks will be high. (Perhaps one reason that *The Godfather* is the most popular film in America is that it exemplifies a successful migrant, and one who honours his family. ‘If we know the game is rigged, we also like to think that the owner of the roulette table loves his mother and looks like Michael Corleone,’ writes the editor of Harpers, Lewis Lapham.) Uncertainty about roots is a consequence, which leads to fascination with family ancestry, and with groups who maintained the authenticity of their traditions and beliefs, such as the Amish and the Shakers.

The conflict between love of neighbour and individual accumulation remains unresolved in civic religion, as do innumerable other ethical issues. Uncertainty about values, not least about sexual mores, may be another of many reasons for insecurity. Another is the rapid evolution of gender roles. Feminism is correcting gross injustices, but the full, practical adjustments have taken time for both women and men. There has been considerable growth in the self-confidence and achievements of many women, but inequities of access to managerial positions, and of income, remain, and some women continue to be uncertain about the combination of roles for which they are best suited. Maturing of feminine roles has left some men insecure about the meaning of masculinity. American boys, writes Jonathan Raban, used to be encouraged to read Fenimore Cooper, Mark Twain, and Ernest Hemingway to whom real life ‘always happened out of doors. It was essentially solitary. It was dangerous. It called for self-reliance above all human qualities. Woodcraft and seamanship would stand you in far better stead than, say, the capacity to express affection.’ Films like *Deliverance* and *Stand by Me* hark back to that time. Generational change is contributing to adaptation.

Robert Putnam is famous for identifying a decline in the strength of social networks in America during the last thirty years of the twentieth century. Membership of community and sporting organisations has fallen by up to half; electoral turnout has dropped by a quarter; church attendance has declined; and even picnics are less common. Amongst the causes has been increasing workforce participation; urban sprawl involving increased commuting time; television – the average American watches for four hours a day – and home computing. Of course, the telephone and emailing are new and valuable forms of networking and friendships through work often fulfil the human need for
sociability. The fine American tradition of political consultation through town meetings continues, though with smaller participation.

An attractive aspect of social solidarity is the extent of voluntary individual philanthropy. Seventy percent of American households give money to charity, with donations totalling over $150 billion, more than 1.5 percent of national income. Foundations endowed by the wealthy have been crucial in stimulating the vitality of intellectual, cultural, and social life and in reducing deprivation, particularly in the developed nation with the most restricted system of government service provision. Yet the US is the meanest contributor to international development assistance. The proportion of national income allocated to official international aid is just over 0.1 per cent, compared with an average amongst developed donor countries of 0.4 per cent. The reason is at least partly ignorance: pollsters have found that Americans believe their country contributes ten to twenty times the actual amount, and that this is closer to what the average citizen thinks the country should be contributing. The question is, then, why members of Congress, the State Department, and USAID do not provide accurate information more accessibly.

Nationalism has been one response to the need for community identification. Americans do not perceive themselves as nationalistic, yet are intensely patriotic, as the Stars and Stripes hanging on every second house demonstrates. Within that context, migrants often attempt to hold on to national traditions and to fight the political battles being fought in their countries of origin. Two examples of groups who have significant national political influence are Cuban-Americans and Jews.

There are 850,000 Cuban-Americans in Florida, over half registered to vote. If they vote together, their influence on the outcome in a traditionally Democratic state can be decisive. In 2000, Cuban-Americans gave Bush a quarter of a million more votes than Gore, in an election decided by five hundred votes. That accounts for the refusal of all Administrations to move significantly towards recognition of Cuba. One international consequence of that is the intensity of the hostility between Cuba and the US at the UN, which prolongs every negotiation because of attempts at trivial point scoring by both sides.

American support for Israel is the clearest example of a core element of US foreign policy that is determined by domestic electoral forces. John Newhouse writes that a ‘cohort in the Pentagon has operated, in effect, like an extension of the Likud leadership and has scared other governments with talk of redrawing the political map of the Middle East and implicitly turning the region into a US-Israeli co-management sphere.’ A third of American development assistance goes to Israel and Egypt. American financial assistance to Israel has totalled $80 billion since 1974.

The most alarming indicator of the power of conservative sections of the Jewish and linked Evangelical Christian and neo-conservative lobbies was President Bush’s decision in April 2004 to endorse Israeli plans to retain some West Bank settlements and reject the Palestinians’ right to return. This involved abandoning any pretence of support
for a negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. By accepting Israeli Prime Minister Sharon’s imposition of a settlement on the Palestinians, this decision abandoned the Palestinians, and discarded both the international peace process and a policy position held for several decades in conjunction with European allies. It inflamed even further the hatred of America throughout the Middle East and dismay about the Bush Administration in the rest of the world.

v. Religion, Ideology and Media

… there’s little point in having a foreign policy, or an arms policy, unless, as a nation, you know who you are, what sort of nation you are or imagine yourself to be.\textsuperscript{136}

Elisabeth Sifton

America is one of the most religiously engaged countries in the world. ‘Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America,’ writes Robert Putnam.\textsuperscript{137} Most Americans say that they believe in God and two thirds of the adult population are members of a religious organisation. Membership of church, synagogue, mosque, or temple has been falling slowly during recent decades and religious participation has probably been declining rather faster, but about a quarter of the adult population attend religious worship every week and another five per cent in most weeks.\textsuperscript{138} A simple indicator of the importance of religion in America is the almost universal practice of ending speeches by saying something equivalent to ‘God bless you.’

Putnam considers that the revitalisation of evangelical religion is the most notable feature of American religious life in recent decades. The New York Times columnist, Nicholas Kristof, thinks that ‘America is in the middle of another Great Awakening, and that while this may bring comfort to many, it will also mean a growing polarization within American society,’ and could do so also with the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{139} About a third of Americans say they are ‘born again,’ and so identify themselves with the evangelical wing of the churches.

Tocqueville observes that ‘American clergymen stay out of public life.’\textsuperscript{140} Yet there is a strong tradition of religious belief underlying political opinion and public policy debate. The leadership of mainstream churches have a constructive record of involvement in discussion of international policy, advocating multilateral engagement and humanitarian and conflict reducing policies. Religious conservatives – whether Protestant, Catholic, Jewish or Muslim – are sometimes drawn together to support such positions as support for the family, opposition to abortion and opposition to gay marriage. Evangelicals started to become politically active in the seventies. By 1994, Christian conservatives cast two or every five Republican votes.\textsuperscript{141} At the Republican convention in 2000, they achieved the removal of all language that was pro-choice, supportive of gay rights or of sex education.
The *Left Behind* books are a significant indicator of interests and values amongst evangelical Christians. The authors, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, base the books on their literal interpretation of the final book in the Christian Bible, Revelation. The first eleven in the series have sold 40 million copies, and unseated John Grisham as the best-selling novelist for adults. Christian Zionists passionately support Israel because they are convinced, by a literal reading of Revelation, that Christ will come again only when Jews possess the Holy Land. The most prominent Christian Zionist, Tom DeLay, Majority leader in the House of Representatives, is critical of Bush’s road map for moving towards a two state solution to the Middle East conflict, because it is inconsistent with the Jews occupying all of Israel and Palestine. The other part of their belief is that Jews will either die in the Apocalypse or be converted to Christianity. About this, Israelis are unlikely to be so sanguine.

The series has been sharply criticised for its emphasis on the conversion of the Jews and the focus on the brutal rule of the Anti-Christ, portrayed as a former head of the UN. Theologians have also trenchantly criticised the books for its simplified distortion of good and evil worlds: the enemies of America are also God’s enemies. Biblical scholar Douglas Hare, writes ‘How foolish it is for humans to think they can play with biblical numbers and ambiguous prophecies and discover what was hidden even from Jesus!’

The extremism of these fundamentalist Christians is reinforced by the extremism of fundamentalist Muslims who advocate violent repudiation of the commercialism and decadence they perceive in the West. Both provide motives for the US’s unilateral aggressiveness, the former because of its apparent electoral strength, the later because of its threat to US security. Both ideologies are fuel for the neo-conservatives who are preoccupied with achieving dominance for US political ideology and its energy and security interests in the Middle East. Asians, Latin Americans, and Africans are often repelled by Americans’ assertiveness about their political and economic models, while they deny imperial intent.

There is a higher degree of political conformity in the mainstream media in the US than people from most other advanced countries would readily accept. Tocqueville noted in the early nineteenth century ‘I know of no country in which there is in general less independence of spirit and true freedom of discussion than in America.’ September 11 stunned political debate. The self-censorship and compliance of journalists embedded with American forces during the Iraq war was a clear example. Conformity is the norm in authoritarian corporate subcultures, the military, and government services.

Fortunately, there is a fine tradition of highly intelligent, analytical journalism in parts of the media in the US. *The New York Times* is perhaps the most professional newspaper in the English-speaking world. It has 27 overseas bureaus. National public radio and television attempts to achieve the quality of the BBC without public funding. Public television cannot afford its own news service, and 220 public television stations round the country relay a prime-time news service prepared by the BBC.
There are a group of intelligent, thoughtful periodicals offering penetrating analysis of contemporary public issues together with brilliant writing about culture and history. Amongst the most outstanding are *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, *Harpers Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Nation*. These journals are radical in the original sense – they go to the root of issues in their analytical search for understanding. Literature, too, is and has been a powerful form of national self-criticism: is there any more effective literary critique of capitalism than Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*?

The private television and radio conglomerates have far higher coverage: News Corp/Fox; General Electric/NBC; Viacom/CBS; Disney/ABC; Tribune Corp and Clear Channel (the radio network that owns 1,200 stations in the US.) These private networks conform more closely to Administration preferences than either of the publicly owned networks in Britain and Australia. Murdoch’s Fox and Clear Channel have strong ideological commitments and are vigorous advocates of conservative positions. Media conglomerates have become the propaganda arms of government in return for regulatory advantage such as relaxation of ownership limits. The latest reward for Murdoch’s loyalty is permission from the Administration to take over America’s largest direct-broadcast satellite service, DirecTV, which has 11 million subscribers, complementing well the broadcasting and cable channels he already owns and so further increasing media concentration.

There is even stronger ideological assertiveness on some radio networks. ‘In 1980, only seventy-five [radio] stations in the US used the all-talk format, and most were politically anodyne. Conservative hosts were novelty items. Now there are more than thirteen hundred talk stations, the vast majority of which are relentlessly right-wing.’ Rush Limbaugh is the archetype. They have an audience of around 15 million. Hendrik Hertzberg, an editorial writer for *The New Yorker*, describes right-wing radio as ‘niche entertainment for the spiritually unattractive. It succeeds because a substantial segment of the right-wing rank and file enjoys listening, hour after hour, as smug, angry, disdainful middle-aged men spew raw contempt at reified enemies, named and unnamed. To the chronically resentful, they offer the sadistic consolation of an endless sneer …’ This is not a subject for condemnation, but rather for grief that so many people have an existence cramped by such a sense of injustice and marginalisation. The very existence of these programs is a challenge to all who care about society to work for greater fairness and inclusiveness.

During the nineties the American networks ‘basically abandoned real coverage of foreign news, relying instead on video supplied from independent sources, with an occasional narration from one their correspondents based in London to give a certain foreign verisimilitude to the piece,’ writes John Stacks, a former deputy managing editor for *Time Magazine*. Associated Press provides much of their international news from its 100 bureaus outside the US. Between 2002 and 2004, the interest in international news has grown again: the proportion of Americans saying they track overseas news most of the time has increased from 37 per cent to 52 per cent.
American newspapers are slowly losing readers. They attempt to lighten their content by entertaining readers, but this makes them less use in delivering news so fewer people bother to read them. Celebrity is worshiped, image is celebrated, spin has become the norm, and trivia are promoted. The New York Times has become a national newspaper with a daily circulation of about a million. Some former newspaper readers have migrated to weekly news magazines including *The Economist* that sells close to half a million copies in the US, and some use the web. ‘The democratic ideal of an informed electorate is dying before our eyes,’ concludes Stacks. Declining newspaper readership and electoral participation are amongst the most visible symptoms of growing social disengagement.

**vi. Electoral Constraints and Opportunities**

The defining political fact of our time is the division of America.

George Stephanopoulos

A striking feature of contemporary politics in America is declining voter turnout. The proportion of adults who vote in national elections is lower in the US than in all other western democracies other than Switzerland. During the forty years from 1960 to 2000, the proportion of voting age Americans actually casting a vote in presidential elections fell from 63 to 51 per cent. This principally relates to generational change: baby-boomers and their children, the X-generation, are less likely to vote than their parents and grandparents. Putnam shows that over about the same period, interest in public affairs fell by about a fifth.

At the same time, political parties have professionalized their activities. Party incomes have multiplied, largely from corporate contributions and donations from the wealthy, enabling employment of more staff, increased polling, and mass marketing through advertising and commercialised contact with voters through telephone, mail, and email. Yet identification with parties has fallen, from the high level of 75 per cent around 1960 to 65 per cent in the late nineties. Attendance at meetings and volunteer support has also tended to fall, though the doubling of attendances at the Iowa caucuses during the 2004 presidential primary indicates voter responsiveness when a clear issue is at stake.

A second striking feature of American electoral politics at the start of the third millennium is the parity of partisan affiliation and the strength of partisan polarisation. In the November 2000 presidential election, Democrat Al Gore received 48.4 per cent of all votes and Republican George W. Bush 47.9 per cent. The Supreme Court decided to stop counting of disputed votes in Florida at a point where Bush was ahead, giving Bush 271 Electoral College votes to Gore’s 266. The point here is not the partisanship of this legal decision but the closeness of the result. The equal proportions of adults aligning with each party also demonstrate this parity, as does the division of state governorships – 24 held by Democrats and 26 by Republicans after the 2002 election; and the similar proportions of state legislators from each party.
In this situation of declining political engagement and party parity, each party has to identify the groups that make up the coalitions of its supporters, and those who are uncommitted. Electoral tactics must concentrate on both enthusing loyal voters, and attracting the undecided. Stanley Greenberg identifies Republican loyalists as including disproportionately: white Evangelicals; voters in rural areas, the Deep South, and the high-growth outer metropolitan areas in the South and South-west; blue collar married men; and the most privileged, the rich and superrich. Democrat loyalists include large majorities of the African-American and Hispanic communities; women with post-graduate degrees; the least religious; people from the most cosmopolitan areas, especially on the East and West coasts; and union families. A major group not mentioned by Greenberg, which seems likely to tend towards support of the Republicans, are small business people. Democrat supporters are likely to include those concerned about the environment, a growing proportion of members of mainstream churches, better-educated men, and internationalists.

Many loyalists joined during the continuing culture battles. Those concerned about such issues as sexual mores including family life, abortion, homosexuality, and most recently gay marriage, and taking a conservative position on them, are attracted to the Republican Party. Others concerned about equity, justice, the environment, and peace have strengthened their alignment with the Democrats. The strength of commitment amongst both groups has tended to increase, making politics more polarised and America more divided.

Volatile groups, without partisan attachments, include Catholic voters, married women without a college education, and the young. Some others do not see either party as interested in their concerns including: ageing blue-colour workers frustrated about excessive influence of corporations; married working class women concerned about health care; and college educated men and women critical of lack of debate about the economy. The young often regard political debates as irrelevant, in part because they are tolerant about sexual mores.

Republicans often seem to believe that their party is not a section or faction of society but another name for the country of which they are the true patriots. They have been the initiators of the major policy changes during the last thirty years. Despite their anti-government rhetoric, under George W. Bush national expenditure is increasing, debt is multiplying, and civil administration is becoming more intrusive and coercive. Kevin Baker writes in *Harpers* that there are ‘more weapons, more soldiers, more policy, more spies, more prisons.’ The mantra of homeland security is used to justify greater visibility of uniformed personnel in public places, control of access to not only air, but also sometimes rail and road transport, and an explosion of clandestine domestic activity destroying confidence in personal privacy. The authoritarian, paternalistic style of military management is becoming the style of government. They have the advantage of incumbency – in the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court. There are major potential conflicts among the interests supporting George W. Bush. Why would conservative Christians want the government to reduce public services to make way for
tax cuts for the wealthy? Do all evangelicals really support military aggression? They want honesty within corporations as well as within government.

Democrats have the advantage of freshness, of being able to criticise as Iraq becomes bloodier, as global contempt for the Bush Administration increases, as unemployment remains high, as the numbers without health insurance rise, as pollution spreads, and as the wealthy and large corporations entrench their power, constantly reminding the middle class of their neglect. Political scientists John Judis and Ruy Teixeira conclude that ‘When the fear of terror recedes, and when Americans begin to focus again on job, home, and the pursuit of happiness, the country will once again become fertile ground for the Democrats’ progressive centrism and post-industrial values.’ They emphasise the attractiveness of the Democrats in a society where education and information are becoming the most important form of capital and in which human services rather than agriculture or manufacturing are the sector of employment growth. Greenberg concludes ‘The Democrats’ best chance of breaking the impasse is by changing the subject and putting at risk the current game. … Democrats can take to the voters a historic choice about opportunity – about how America makes sure our bounty enriches everyone – about our capacity as a nation to use government on behalf of community.’

One question is whether voters will have enough dispassionate information to make common sense decisions. The power of money distorts American politics, through advertising and the influence of lobbyists. Three billion dollars was spent on the election campaign in 2000, most of it from the wealthy.

It is important to mention one final point that has nothing directly to do with foreign affairs. A struggle for the integrity of the electoral system is underway which could erupt into massive controversy about the accuracy of election results. There are many current threats to the accuracy of voting systems:

- Electronic voting without scrutiny of software or paper printouts of each vote creates the opportunity for computer programmers to introduce systemic bias into the results;
- Systematic discrimination against voter registration and artificial impediments to voting persist in some places, targeted at minority groups;
- Gerrymandering of Congressional district boundaries is being attempted to give parties electoral advantages; and
- The loss of voting rights by ex-prisoners becomes a form of racist discrimination in situations where African Americans are disproportionately imprisoned.

America may be coming to a point were a fundamental reorientation of politics will happen. That is what President Bush has attempted, but the hostility to his version is growing. ‘At the bottom of all American patriotism lay, and lies to the present day, the commitment to freedom – the favourite word, the favourite idea, the favourite boast.’

‘The dominant theme of American politics since the nineteen-sixties has been freedom: cultural freedom under the Democrats, economic freedom under the Republicans. The
pursuit of happiness became a private affair, and the sense of civic responsibility withered among liberals and conservatives alike. The political choice was between two versions of hedonism. The shallowness of the focus on freedom without an accompanying sense of responsibility to the common good is becoming clearer.

Ted Halsted, President of the New America Foundation argues that ‘American history reveals that periods of fundamental reform are typically triggered by one or more of the following: a major war; a large-scale shift from one industrial era to another; extreme levels of economic inequality; a dramatic change in the composition of the political parties. On rare occasions when these forces coincide, they fundamentally transform society.’ Aspects of those conditions exist now, and multiplied by the pervasive fears of external threats, may be generating structural changes in American society.

In sum, The American founding fathers’ view of being a chosen people in a promised land and a light on a hill for the rest of the world has evolved into a sense of special calling to lead the world to freedom and democracy. This underlies the widespread self-assurance and confidence in the superiority of American values and practices. Yet America has frequently failed to demonstrate the values of its civic religion in its international actions. It does not have the predominant economic power asserted by Bush Administration philosophers: America is economically interdependent with the rest of the world and beset by major inequities and imbalances.

While competitive individualism is a prominent feature of American society, social solidarity is also influential though less well recognised. Fear and insecurity are widespread and were inflamed by September 11. President Bush and his colleagues have further exaggerated those fears. A high proportion of Americans are religiously committed, and evangelical Christians are politically influential. The intensity of current political polarisation, together with the growth of large inequities, the reaction to the Iraq war, and other factors may well lead to structural shifts in American society. Americans can make choices on many occasions about government purposes and strategies. Elections are especially important opportunities for such decisions.
American Critiques

i. Supremacists versus Multilateralists

We have … in the form of our Pentagon, a vast bureaucratic monster that we don’t know even how to cut down, not to mention to bring fully under control. But purely military power, even in its greatest dimensions of superiority, can produce only short term successes.  

George Kennan

‘The United States is in the midst of a great debate about national security,’ writes John Ikenberry, the Professor of Geopolitics and Global Justice at Georgetown University.  

There has been an outpouring of books and articles in America hostile to the Bush Administration and its policies. They are widely read and popular. Sometimes in 2003 and 2004, a third of the books on The New York Times non-fiction best-seller list were critiques of President Bush and the style and policies of his government, most written by Americans. Many Americans are as critical of the Bush revolution as is most of the rest of the world. The editorial page editor of The International Herald Tribune, Serge Schmemann, began a review of recent books on American foreign policy ‘The new American order has generated a tsunami of anti-Americanism.’ He concluded ‘Though I have lived abroad for many years and regard myself as hardened to anti-Americanism, I confess I was taken aback to have my country depicted, page after page, book after book, as a dangerous empire in its last throes, as a failure of democracy, as militaristic, violent, hegemonic, evil, callous, arrogant, imperial and cruel.’

The vitality of this debate is one of the powerful indicators of hope within the United States. A fair understanding of the contemporary political scene in America must avoid the simplistic anti-Americanism that identifies all Americans with the policies of President Bush. One of the most attractive features of the US, and especially of New York, is the strength and quality of public debate. There is a tendency amongst some non-Americans to make blanket condemnations of America when accurate observation would show that particular sub-groups are responsible for specific strategies. While there are national characteristics, these are not identical with the features of one president and his advisors.

A titanic struggle is under way in America. Within the mainstream, there is continuum of attitudes between two poles. At one pole are the ideological certainties of those who believe that military supremacy is necessary and sufficient to ensuring American national security and the global political dominance that are also considered mandatory. At the other are the well-informed uncertainties of those who believe in evidence-based policy-making and active American participation in multilateral international relations. The two groups can be labelled supremacists and multilateralists.

Since 9/11, the supremacists talk as if they consider that terrorists threaten America with national annihilation. They purport to perceive this threat as of such
unprecedented immediacy and magnitude that all public policy must aim at destroying terrorists. This helps to justify, what in part they desire on more fundamental grounds: multiplying military and intelligence expenditure, disregarding civil liberties, withdrawing from international treaties and only collaborating with other nations in international institutions when this furthers America’s immediate aims.

The multilateralists perceive the supremacists’ unilateral assertiveness as part of the problem. They consider that renunciation of treaties, contempt for international cooperation and neglect of civil liberties intensifies international opposition, divides the nation, and increases the motivation for terrorism. Multilateralists would rather strengthen the framework of international order by cooperating with other countries to strengthen international treaties and their implementation and the effectiveness of international institutions. They interpret the history of the last half century as showing the scope for American leadership of global political processes. They believe that when America is so much militarily stronger than any other nation, the scope for such leadership is greater than ever.

Earlier chapters of this book discussed the arguments of the supremacists. It is now important to summarise arguments of multilateralist writers, and yet who cover a spectrum of views. There are at least a couple of dozen recent American books and innumerable articles on US foreign policy critical of Bush and suggesting alternatives so a sample is all that can be given. The reaction against the Bush Administration’s extremism is so strong and widespread that election of John Kerry as president is quite possible. If that happens, some of these critics will be amongst the senior advisors to the new administration.

An indication of the way in which mainstream American international relations experts perceive their country is Professor John Ikenberry’s *Foreign Affairs* survey of recent books on whether there is an American empire. He writes that ‘The United States is not just a superpower pursuing its interest; it is a producer of world order. Over the decades – with more support than resistance from other nations – it has fashioned a distinctively open and rule-based international order.’

If only this were true! The impact of much, especially recent, American foreign policy has been to undermine, deflate or even to destroy aspects of international order and the rule of law. As political science professors David Coates and Joel Krieger write, ‘… to many on the receiving end of US foreign policy, in the Cold War era, the USA itself was, and had long been, a rogue state in its own right, doing all the things that rogue states do: funding terrorists, performing covert operations, undermining democratic governments, or tolerating and supporting those that did.’

Ikenberry expresses a common nationalistic over-confidence amongst American international relations experts that confuses good intentions with the reality of American international action.

The book most highly praised by the non-Bush foreign policy establishment is *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* by Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was President Carter’s National Security Advisor. John Ikenberry calls it ‘the single most lucid and systematic statement of America’s 21st-century security challenges yet to
William Pfaff, columnist of the International Herald Tribune, describes it as ‘a nuanced expression of the conventional wisdom among foreign policy experts …’

Brzezinski’s starting point is that the preponderance of American military power is ‘indispensable’ to global stability. However, he argues, unilateral misuse of that power undermines American legitimacy, reducing both American security and global stability. America’s security is dependent on increased global security. He supports American leadership in an interdependent world. He sees violent political turmoil as the principal threat, terrorism as one of its ugliest manifestations and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as one of its greatest dangers.

Brzezinski considers the long southeastern rim of Eurasia, which he calls the Global Balkans, as the region of greatest instability, because of its potential for ethnic and religious interstate wars. He considers that ‘the major task facing the United States in the effort to promote global security will be the pacification and then the cooperative organization of a region that contains the world’s greatest concentration of political injustice, social deprivation, demographic congestion, and potential for high-intensity violence.’ The greatest grievance amongst the 1.2 billion Muslims, most of who live in this region, is US support for Israel. Resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict is therefore the highest priority towards reducing political turmoil. The European Union is a necessary participant in that process, not least because it has a more even-handed stance. Other American priorities, he writes, are moving the focus of oil production from the Persian Gulf to Central Asia, and negotiation of a regional nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Brzezinski asserts that ‘an effective response to global turmoil requires major reliance on American power as the essential prerequisite to global stability.’ He recognises the European Union as the second actor at the core of global political stability and economic wealth. However, he does not endorse the common American stance of urging increased military expenditure in Europe ‘a Europe that actually did do “enough” in defense would inescapably give America an acute case of post-hegemonic discomfort.’ A militarily self-reliant Europe would require America to share fully responsibilities for worldwide policymaking! ‘Acting separately, America can be preponderant but not omnipotent; Europe can be rich but impotent. Acting together, America and Europe are in effect globally omnipotent.’

He says that the power of several Asian states is rising rapidly. China competes for regional pre-eminence with American-allied Japan. Korea is unnaturally divided; Taiwan’s future is contentious; Indonesia is internally vulnerable. China and India are both growing rapidly. Pakistan joins with them in possession of nuclear weapons. All are dependent on vulnerable sea transport for trade, especially through the Strait of Malacca. They are strengthening their naval capacity. Brzezinski suggests that extension of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the whole of Eurasia could be useful in monitoring military activity and in peacekeeping. He also proposes including China and India as members of the G8. These and the other proposals mentioned are useful but very modest.
Brzezinski exaggerates America’s role in achieving global stability. For example he thinks that if US forces were withdrawn from Europe, East Asia and the Persian Gulf, the ‘world would plunge almost immediately into a politically chaotic crisis.’ Rather, in Europe, there would more probably be strengthened cooperation between the EU and Russia, relief amongst many Europeans, and alarm only amongst some shopkeepers near American bases. Counter-terrorism activity has been more successful in arresting suspects in Britain, Germany, France, and Spain than in the US. American invasions of Vietnam and Iraq, Grenada and several other Central American and Caribbean countries, clandestine activity in many countries including Iran and Afghanistan, and support for Israel, have added to global instability. American passivity or opposition to UN action in Rwanda, Haiti, Liberia, and Sierra Leone has undermined or contributed nothing to conflict resolution. Brzezinski also forgets Washington’s famously short attention span. By implicitly supporting the American militarists’ view of the political dominance given them by their military superiority, Brzezinski reinforces the supremacist view of the world, even though his analysis is much more realistic about the multilateral imperative for improving global stability. In effect, he denies that hegemony produces hubris.\(^{169}\)

Joseph Nye is the dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and was Chairman of the National Intelligence Council and Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton Administration. His book, *Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s only Superpower can’t go it alone*, and a sequel, *Soft Power*, are strong critiques of unilateralism, because it does not work.\(^{170}\) Nye writes that the agenda of world politics is like a three dimensional chess game in which countries must play vertically as well as horizontally. On the top board is classic interstate military conflict where the US is supreme. On the middle board of interstate economic issues, the distribution of power is multipolar. The transnational issues on the bottom board include everything else, terrorism and climate change, migration and disease control, the Internet and culture, about which all countries are concerned and for which interstate cooperation is essential. He argues that the Bush Administration has only been playing on the first board.

Nye raises three crucial questions. First, is co-operation with the US likely to be in the interests of the rest of the world, to which he replies that in effect the rest of the world has no option but to cooperate with America. The issue is about the terms of that interdependence. Second, is cooperation with the rest of the world actually in America’s interest? Nye argues that there are such strong net advantages for the US in international co-operation that it must recognise interdependence.\(^{171}\) Cooperation is essential for sharing the costs of global security and development, but it also reduces motivation for the formation of alliances of opposition or competition. In any case, both sentiment and the values and views of the majority of Americans favour interdependence within a principled legal and institutional international structure.

Third, when America is so militarily powerful, how can other countries act to facilitate movement towards a more just and peaceful international system and constrain misuse of US power? Threatening formation of alternative alliances is one option.
American arrogance increases the incentive for others to coordinate to escape its hegemony. China, Japan, Russia, India, and the European Union could each become the centre of alternative alliances, though there are a variety of reasons why each of them is unlikely to want or have the capacity to do so even in the longer term. Coordination could also include cooperation on particular issues short of formal alliance formation. American behaviour will greatly influence the strength of the incentive. Nye quotes Richard Haas, director of policy planning in the State Department under George Bush Senior, who wrote that any attempt by America to dominate ‘would lack domestic support and stimulate international resistance, which in turn would make the costs of hegemony all the greater and its benefits all the smaller.’

Nye argues for preservation of American pre-eminence, but also for the incorporation of global interests into a broad concept of the national interest. He emphasises that most Americans want this, pointing to an opinion poll in which seventy-three per cent of respondents agreed with the statement ‘I regard myself as a citizen of the world as well as a citizen of the United States.’ He advocates active attention to soft power – ‘the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.’ The US spends seventeen times as much on its military as on all aspects of foreign affairs including aid as well as diplomacy and public information. Increased attention to soft power would include changing both the style and substance of American foreign policy towards multilateralism, negotiation, and increased development assistance; careful descriptions of policy (‘it is a mistake to confuse the politics of primacy with the politics of empire’); and increased support for exchanges across societies and for information.

George Soros is a brilliantly successful financial market dealer and generous philanthropist for open societies. The first half of his book, entitled *The Bubble of American Supremacy: Correcting the Misuse of American Power*, is a tough critique of the Bush Administration’s supremacist policies, pre-emptive military doctrine, invasion of Iraq, and erosion of civil liberties. He says touchingly ‘This is not the America I chose as my home.’ He notes the ‘well-known syndrome both in individuals and groups’ of ‘victims turning perpetrators,’ mentions Israel as ‘perhaps the most poignant and difficult case’ and then describes the United States under Bush as a ‘victim-turned-perpetrator,’ even though the American public would be loath to recognise it.

Soros describes ‘a constructive vision,’ though at a rather high level of generality. He writes of the importance of the framework of collective security, including through both national military capacity and international treaties, to slow down an arms race. He notes realistically the risk that the powerful US could cheat on arms control treaties: America has ‘much greater chemical and biological weapons capabilities than any other state.’

Soros emphasises the importance of increasing economic opportunity and reducing global inequities through major increases in Official Development Assistance,
to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for example, and describes means used to improve the effectiveness of aid in his foundation’s activities. He suggests that the International Monetary Fund resume issuing Special Drawing Rights (a form of international currency) and redistributing them to developing countries, as one means of increasing finance for developing countries. The large revenues from natural resource projects ought to belong to the people, Soros argues, but foreign companies often pay little, and corrupt national diversion of revenue is rife. Requiring companies to ‘publish what they pay’ is a way of increasing public transparency and accountability. His conclusion is that electoral defeat of the Bush Administration is not enough: repudiation of the Bush doctrine and adoption of a more enlightened vision of America’s role in the world is essential.

Soros and the other writers mentioned have what seems to a non-American to be an inflated view of American power. He writes that ‘It is the United States that sets the agenda for the world; other countries have to respond to whatever policies the United States pursues.’\footnote{178} ‘…a way must be found to reconcile the common interest with the principle of sovereignty. … The task of leading such an effort must fall to the United States, in view of its dominant position.’\footnote{179} America needs to maintain its military might.

Chalmers Johnson has written two books that are crucial for understanding the evolving structure of American society, 	extit{Blowback: the Costs and Consequences of American Empire} and 	extit{The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic}. 	extit{Blowback} is a compelling analysis of the unexpected consequences of the extensive American international clandestine activity. 	extit{The Sorrows of Empire} describes the growth of American military power within the United States and internationally. ‘Slowly but surely the Department of Defense is obscuring and displacing the Department of State as the primary agency for making and administering foreign policy.’\footnote{180} Johnson argues that since September 11, ‘the growth of militarism, official secrecy, and a belief that the United States is no longer bound, as the Declaration of Independence so famously puts it, by “a decent respect for the opinions of mankind” is probably irreversible.’ He makes a powerful case, supported by much previously unpublicised information, which demonstrates that the supremacists of the New American Century are succeeding in their goal of making the US a military juggernaut capable of world domination. The important issue raised here is whether the militarization of American society and policy is irreversible.

Benjamin Barber’s 	extit{Fear’s Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy} is a vivid and well informed denunciation of the Bush foreign policy, strategic doctrines and underlying assumptions. He describes his constructive proposals as ‘preventive democracy,’ emphasising that the sole long-term defence against terrorism, anarchy, and violence is democracy – within nations and in ‘the conventions, institutions, and regulations that govern relations among, between, and across nations.’\footnote{181} He recognises that democracy means much more than just elections and majority rule; that its establishment requires a long, painstaking domestic process; that ‘you can’t export McWorld and call it democracy;’ and that ‘you can’t export America and call it freedom.’
He endorses T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) who wrote ‘Better to let them do it imperfectly than to do it perfectly yourself, for it is their country, their way, and your time is short,’ though he also recognises the paternalism and condescension in that recommendation. ‘Democracies grow from inside out and from bottom up rather than form outside in and top down,’ he writes. Therefore, he emphasises support for education – Afghanistan needs seventy thousand teachers more than seventy thousand troops – and of national NGOs, which in their plurality and diversity embody the richness of civil society.

The most widely read American writers on foreign policy, within the US and around the world, are Noam Chomsky and Michael Moore. Chomsky is a brilliant linguistic theorist and the most intellectually powerful and sustained critic of American foreign policy. He is passionately opposed to the injustice of American international action, exposing the moral and intellectual inconsistencies, hypocrisies and the selectivity of the application of principles. His most recent book, *Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance* is an attack on the long history of US foreign interventions, focussing especially on the background to the invasion of Iraq. He writes with rage, says Larissa MacFarquhar in *The New Yorker*; ‘His sentences slice and gash … The sentences are accusations of guilt, but not from a position of innocence or hope of something better.’ Chomsky’s analysis does offer hope to those who are appalled and frightened by misuse of American military power because he reliably leads the exposé. He stands out in a world where intellectuals too often bow to power. He does not, though, offer the hope of an alternative. When audiences beg for suggestions after ‘the unrelieved gloom of a lecture’ or a book, he limits himself to praising peace, solidarity and global justice movements and noting the slow evolution of a human rights culture among the general population. He does suggest ‘one simple way to reduce the threat of terror: stop participating in it.’

Michael Moore is the most popular critic of America and its foreign policies. His third book, *Stupid White Men*, was on *The New York Times* best-seller list for 59 weeks and sold more than four million copies worldwide. His fourth book, *Dude, Where is my Country*, was top of the German best-seller list at the same time as *Stupid White Men* was still second. His films also reach a huge audience. *Bowling for Columbine* earned over $21 million at the box office, three times as much as any previous documentary, and won the Oscar for best feature documentary in 2003. *Fahrenheit 9/11* won the Palme d’Or at Cannes in May 2004.

Through careful research and a fine sense of political priorities, he selects targets – ideas and issues as embodied in particular people – and ridicules them using one of the most effective forms of political demolition, mockery. George W. Bush (whom he begins by calling George of Arabia when discussing the President’s links with Saudi Arabia) and the Iraq war are the principal targets of *Dude, Where is my Country*. The constructive dimension of that book is a chapter headed ‘A Liberal Paradise’ in which he argues for recognition of the common sense of the majority of Americans. He quotes respected opinion pollsters whose results show that 86 per cent of Americans ‘agree with the goals of the civil rights movement’; 83 per cent say they are in agreement with the
goals of the environment movement; eight in ten believe health insurance should be provided equally to everyone; and so on. He suggests that Americans should take heart, change their self-image, and acknowledge that ‘You live in a nation full of progressive-thinking, liberal-leaning, good-hearted people.’ \(^{185}\) He argues credibly that deep fears are distorting these humane impulses and proposes that sympathetic dialogue can demonstrate respect and acceptance and enable the fearful to re-evaluate their positions. He thinks that America should feel obliged to refrain from military action until it has restored its moral reputation.

It is important to mention one more book, quite different from the rest since it is not principally an attack on the Bush revolution or an argument for alternatives, but is rather an indictment of foreign policymakers in several American administrations during the last century and those in other countries as well. The book is ‘A Problem From Hell’: *America and the Age of Genocide*, by Samantha Power.\(^{186}\) She describes each of the genocides during that period – in Armenia, Nazi-occupied Europe, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, Bosnia including Srebrenica, and Kosovo – and says that the United States has never intervened to stop genocide or even condemned it while it occurred. Americans and non-Americans too, mostly chose to look away. Policy makers generally knew enough to warrant action, yet remained passive. The reasons Power identifies are lack of the imagination and analytical rigour needed to accurately describe what is pending or happening; lack of domestic public pressure to take action; reluctance to send troops; and rationalisations about the ineffectiveness of external intervention. She argues that this passivity will continue as long as US presidents fail to make genocide prevention a priority and that that may well continue as long as their inaction involves no political cost.

The American journal, *Foreign Affairs*, has commissioned articles on foreign policy for a Democratic president. Fred Bergsten, Director of the Washington-based Institute for International Economics, argues that the next Administration will be compelled to make international economic policy a top priority.\(^{187}\) The European Union already has a larger total output than the US; is a larger trading entity; the Euro is starting to rival the dollar as a reserve currency; and the cohesion of the Union’s economic policies is increasing. East Asia is becoming a third economic superpower through the rapid growth of China, strengthening regional trade relations, the possibility of an Asian monetary fund, and the region’s foreign reserves which are ten times those of the US. In contrast, the US is the world’s largest deficit and debtor nation, requiring an additional $4 billion each day to balance its international accounts. Therefore budget deficit reduction is vital, to add to national saving and reduce reliance on capital imports.

Bergsten emphasises the benefits of trade liberalisation to the US because of America’s comparative advantage in services and agriculture. He suggests improving adjustment assistance including improved funding of training, to reduce opposition to reduced protection. Given American dependence on energy imports, he proposes changes in bargaining arrangements with OPEC and incentives to reduce domestic oil consumption, including a gasoline tax. He advocates formation of an informal G2 with the European Union, and reactivation of Clinton’s National Economic Council to
improve domestic coordination of economic policy. He notes that ‘Because of their limited benefits, these [bilateral trade agreements] attract little support within Congress.’ Unilateralism is impossible in international economics, he concludes. Increasing attention to international economic issues will therefore contribute to reducing concern in other countries about American hubris.

Sandy Berger, who was National Security Advisor to President Clinton from 1997 to 2001, argues that ‘The real “clash of civilizations” is taking place within Washington … between diametrically opposed conceptions of America’s role in the world.’ A new administration should begin with a commitment to act in concert with allies as a first, not last, resort, and to share both decision-making and risks. The corner-stone of Middle East policy must be ending the Israeli-Palestine conflict, though somewhat surprisingly he says that a Democratic administration must reaffirm the principles of America being ‘Israel’s staunchest ally’ and of being ‘an honest broker between the two sides,’ principles which seem inconsistent. Security policy should concentrate on prevention rather than pre-emption, though he also writes that ‘A Democratic administration will need to reaffirm the United States willingness to use military power – alone if necessary – in defense of its vital interests,’ a unilateralist description. He stresses the importance of strengthening global rules against proliferation. While noting that US military leaders are loath to develop peacekeeping capacity for fear that civilian leaders will be too tempted to use it, he emphasises the importance of just such preparation. He urges reordering army priorities so that US forces have better capacity for safeguarding public security and protecting civilians as well as for traditional fighting tasks.

Berger makes interesting suggestions about a Democratic administration’s role in broadening America’s international agenda and engaging with other regions. He considers that the US has lost ground in East Asia and that ‘China has skilfully turned most of the countries of South-east Asia into allies.’ He does not explain that comment. He emphasises that actions must be consistent with rhetorical commitment including to democracy in Latin America; substantially increased aid for Africa is essential including genuine generosity for HIV/AIDS and other health programs and improvement of water supplies; that the digital divide must be bridged; and that there should be US action to confront climate change.

The person most mentioned as potential Secretary of State under a President Kerry is Richard Holbrooke. Holbrooke was US Ambassador to the UN during the last couple of years of the Clinton Administration. He has been careful recently to avoid making public commitments to positions on most foreign policy issues. A web search shows that most of his publications in the last few years have been forewords to other people’s books. These are beautifully written but unrevealing about his positions. He is clearly a supporter of Kofi Annan as Secretary-General of the UN. He shares his compatriots’ nationalistic overconfidence ‘I need to underscore repeatedly that the UN is only as good as the UN commitment,’ he says, though he qualified this slightly by adding ‘The UN cannot succeed if the US does not support it.'
Similarities in the positions of the most of the critics are readily discernable. A survey of American opinion conducted by a European research group found that the 9/11 attacks produced a perceptible ‘long-term convergence of views amongst the American foreign policy elite … based on the strategies of preemption and democratic enlargement … on both sides of the political divide.’\(^{191}\) All writers naturally emphasise that America’s security must be the principal concern of foreign and defence policy. (Foreign policymakers in every other country have the same priority.) All recognise that the Bush Administration has misused the ‘war on terrorism’ to feed political fantasies to the American population and to exaggerate the country’s global power and importance. All criticise the Bush Administration’s cavalier unilateralism and advocate multilateral engagement and commitment to international consultation. All criticise the militarization of foreign policy. All affirm the value of international institutions. Though they are clearly committed to collective security, they do not spell out in much detail what this would mean. They do not all articulate commitment to international law or treaties. Several do not explicitly recommend abiding by Security Council decisions. Several unambiguously condemn pre-emptive military action; others accept the possibility.

One point on which most implicitly agree is the power and responsibility of the US to determine what happens. Most of these books and articles naturally begin with statements about the major tasks facing America, but then continue as if America has the power to achieve the results sought. Few of the writers are prepared to articulate for American audiences the importance of humility and restraint and the limits of their capacity to determine outcomes. Sometimes this is because they are trying to motivate greater American engagement, and simply exaggerate the results. More often, it is because of the twin curses of American foreign policy, implicit hubris about being God’s own country – a light on the hill for the rest of the world showing the way towards liberty and democracy – and an over-estimation of national power. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote half a century ago, American leaders view themselves as the ‘tutors of mankind in its pilgrimage to perfection.’

For the moment at least, the supremacists have won the debate in America about military dominance. Amongst the writers surveyed, only Chalmers Johnson, Noam Chomsky, and Michael Moore, who are not members of the foreign policy establishment, questioned the level of military expenditure. Most of the writers acknowledge that there is no automatic correlation between military power and political wisdom, notably Brzezinski when he writes ‘Paradoxically, American power worldwide is at its historic zenith while its global political standing is at its nadir.’\(^{192}\) When I asked Joseph Nye at a public meeting whether, in the context of a large budget deficit, one of the implications of his argument for more attention to soft power was that military expenditure should be reviewed and cut wherever possible, his principal comment was that the deficit was due to tax cuts as well as high expenditure. He did concede, though, that while he supported missile defence, it was receiving too much funding. His reaction is understandable – he has been a senior Defense Department official twice – but it illustrates the difficulty for pragmatic centrist in articulating a comprehensive alternative foreign policy strategy. The political right and centre would passionately condemn a comment by an aspirant for
public office, which could be misrepresented as suggesting reduction in American military dominance.

The economic perspective in several of these books and papers is refreshing because it contributes to putting both the fear of terrorism and America’s global position into perspective. Several of the writers emphasise the significance of the growth of a tripolar economic world, with the growing power of the European Union and of China within the East Asian region. Their support for free trade makes sense for the US, but does it so clearly for developing countries? Several have an attractively broad view of a potential US peacekeeping and development agenda in the context of a new administration’s concern about conflict prevention and equitable development, and of the importance of contributing to addressing international crime, drug trafficking, disease, human rights, and global warming. This is the intellectual context within which John Kerry and his advisors are distilling the policies he advocates to the national electorate.

ii. How different could a Kerry Administration be?

Neither am I arguing against the war itself … I am criticising the propensity – the ease – which the United States has for getting into this kind of situation …

John Kerry

Twenty-two year old John Kerry made this remark about the war in Vietnam in the Class Oration when graduating from Yale in 1966. He had been a champion debater and president of the Political Union. A nostalgic reflection on university life was the norm for the Oration, but as he discussed the war, to which he and several friends were about to be sent, he chose instead to give a passionate critique of American foreign policy. Joe Klein, famous political journalist and author, as ‘X,’ of **Primary Colours**, writes that ‘The speech is notable for its central thesis: “The United States must …bring itself to understand that the policy of intervention” – against Communism – “that was right for Western Europe does not and cannot find the same application to the rest of the world.”’

John Forbes Kerry’s paternal grandfather migrated from Austria to Massachusetts, changed his name from Kohn to Kerry, and converted from the Jewish to the Catholic faith. His father was a State Department lawyer with a strong commitment to public service, who had postings in Berlin, Brussels and Oslo as well as Washington, and his mother was a member of the aristocratic Forbes family. In his campaign autobiography, Kerry describes himself as a Foreign Service brat ‘which is a lot like growing up as an Army brat or a Navy brat, except that the PX privileges aren’t as good.’ He attended boarding schools in Switzerland and New Hampshire where he was often lonely. He describes himself as a believing and practicing Catholic, quotes the great commandments about loving God and neighbour and explains that the latter means ‘commitment to equal rights and social justice, here and around the world.’
He joined the Navy while at Yale and after graduation was sent to Vietnam as captain of a small ‘swift boat’ that ferried troops up the rivers of the Mekong Delta. After being wounded three times in four months, he was repatriated in accordance with policy. He received three purple hearts and two decorations for bravery – a Bronze Star for saving the life of a colleague and a Silver Star for leading a counterattack against a Vietcong position. Kerry became spokesperson for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, became a compelling leader of the antiwar movement and toured the country speaking against the war. He ran for Congress from a district in Massachusetts in 1972 but was defeated. He is ‘a genuine jock’ writes Elizabeth Drew. He describes windsurfing and sailing as his favourite sports, and relaxes in the winter by skiing and skating.

After studying law at Boston College, he became an assistant district attorney, a successful prosecutor and then ran successfully for Massachusetts lieutenant governor in 1982 and for the Senate in 1984. He said during an interview about his legal career that ‘I always had a prosecutor’s mind and a prosecutor’s bent.’196 His first marriage broke down traumatically about the time he was starting to run for lieutenant governor and since then he has taken much of the responsibility for his children. In the mid nineties, he married Teresa Heinz, the daughter of a Portuguese doctor who grew up in Mozambique, widow of the Heinz heir. She has worked as a translator, and on environmental and social policy and heads the wealthy Heinz foundations.

In the Senate he had an opportunity for appointment to the domestically influential Appropriations Committee but chose instead the area of his passionate interest, the Foreign Relations Committee, because ‘it was about war and peace,’ and has been a member ever since. His major achievements there were committee investigations, including chairing a committee to investigate the possibility that there were still American prisoners of war in Vietnam. That committee concluded unanimously that there were none, which cleared the way for Clinton to restore diplomatic relations with Vietnam. During the inquiry, strong friendships grew amongst the Vietnam veterans in the Senate, who include not only the Democrats Bob Kerrey and Max Cleland but also the independent Republican, John McCain. The New Yorker writer Jeffrey Toobin concludes that ‘Kerry’s investigations have been unusually thorough by congressional standards.’197 His legislative record in the Senate is not particularly strong; he is not a major intellectual or political innovator, concentrating instead on investigation and review.

Kerry’s presidential-primary campaign autobiography is entitled A Call to Service: My Vision for a Better America. He writes that ‘If I am the Democratic nominee, I will proudly proclaim the values that make us Democrats: … our commitment to international rules and institutions that promote peace, security, prosperity, freedom and democracy.’198 He describes himself as a Democratic internationalist and a progressive, and writes of the ‘great progressives of the past – FDR, JFK, and LBJ,’ as if they are heroes. ‘I don’t care about labels,’ he writes. ‘If I’m dismissed by Republicans or conservative media as a Massachusetts liberal or attacked by Democratic rivals or liberal media as a Clinton-style centrist, I will simply state my values and my ideas and
During the primary campaign, he presented himself as the common sense candidate. A former Republican colleague describes him as ‘a moderate Democrat, very liberal on social issues and reasonably conservative on foreign policy and defense matters.’ He speaks with impressive intelligence, gravitas, subtlety, and lucidity.

His votes coincide with those of his close colleague Ted Kennedy most of the time, though he has been more fiscally conservative. He has aimed to be broadly acceptable, showing, for example, that he is hunter as well as in favour of gun control. He voted against the first Iraq war but uneasily for the second and is critical of Bush for the way he went to war. He acts as if he feels great concern about political pressure and takes opportunistic positions more often than many supporters would wish. For example, his remark to a group of wealthy Democratic supporters that he is ‘not a redistribution Democrat’ is surprising. His quick support for Bush’s support for Sharon’s policy of unilateral action to guarantee some of the major West Bank settlements was astonishing. These examples suggest a tendency to inconsistency – by which all politicians are naturally tempted. His awareness of the complexity of issues and the nuance of his comments is criticised by some commentators as indecisiveness. There have often been questions about his aloofness. Kerry says he earned that reputation by always leaving Washington at the weekend, normally to go to Boston to see constituents and of course his daughters, but there is a widespread view that he is not sufficiently warm to connect well with voters. Others describe this as inherent shyness.

Joe Klein quotes several people who know him well. A former competitor for the Senate says ‘he’s courtly to the point of gentility.’ Tim Worth, a former Senate colleague, says that he is ‘a very driven, very relentless guy.’ Another friend says that under pressure ‘he gets really cool. He really is a warrior – he just loves it.’ He fought a particularly tough Senate election in 1996, which Klein describes as ‘the rarest of events in latter-day American politics: a civil, closely contested, intelligent, and wildly entertaining brawl,’ which in the end Kerry won by eight per cent. During the presidential primaries, there was a crisis amongst his staff and a couple of senior advisors left, but he kept struggling, mortgaged his house to raise funds, and worked his way out of the slump. Perceptive Washington observer Elizabeth Drew writes that ‘Though in previous races Kerry fought back hard when he was behind, and won, few observers expected him to do that this time. That he did so – and did unexpectedly well – testified to his determination and his skill as a candidate as well as his being a beneficiary of the compressed [presidential primary] calendar.’ Once he had won the Iowa caucuses, Democrats in other states concluded that he was the most electable candidate. All this suggests that he is hungry (as Paul Keating would say) to win the presidency, which is one of the necessary conditions for political victory.

In the dichotomy of the nightmares that motivate foreign policy stances, Kerry’s nightmares have certainly been of war, especially after he returned from Vietnam, and they have driven him to concern for peace. (The other nightmare, mentioned in chapter 1, is of threatening monsters, contributing to those who have this dream to seek security through militarization.) His personal campaign slogan when running for re-election in
1990 was ‘Once you’ve seen a war, you never stop fighting for peace.’ He has been sceptical of various proposed appropriations for military programs and intelligence agencies at various times during his Senate career, though not in recent years. One of the themes he used while campaigning during 2004 was ‘Together, we can build a stronger America.’ He writes jokingly about leaders tending to be either hedgehogs or foxes, hedgehogs knowing one thing very well and foxes a little about everything, and has the remarkable frankness to describe himself ‘as a hedgehog who’s been around the field a few times.’ The one thing he knows very well is foreign affairs, though of course his campaign autobiography also has chapters on wealth creation, education, health-care, the environment including energy conservation, and civil rights and responsibilities. He has been active in the Senate on those issues too. He joins with most other American leaders in affirming that theirs is God’s own country. ‘… we must pass on to our children that God-given belief in the universal appeal of our ideals that have always marked our national character.’

Kerry is a foreign policy professional. Significantly – because he is running for president of parochial America – the first thematic chapter of his campaign book is on foreign policy and is entitled ‘The challenge of protecting America and promoting its values and interests.’ He defends this priority by noting that two thirds of the president’s job description is international: chief executive of the nation’s fiscal and domestic policies; head of state and therefore chief diplomat; and commander in chief of the armed forces. He is genuinely outraged at what he calls ‘the Administration’s arrogant, inept, reckless, ideological,’ foreign policy and ironically affirms that ‘even the US needs a few friends on this planet.’ He is committed both to strong defence and to seeking peaceful solutions to conflict whenever possible, yet does not exclude the possibility of unilateral action. ‘People will know that I’m tough and I’m prepared to do what is necessary to defend America, and that includes unilateral deployment of troops if necessary.’ He has said that ‘Every nation has the right to act pre-emptively if it faces an imminent and grave threat.’

Kerry writes of the need to rebuild and retool multilateral institutions and reengage allies. He is a strong supporter of the UN (where his sister has worked effectively in the US Mission on relations with NGOs for many years.) In relation to terrorism he argues that addressing the causes, such as economic bleakness and large, young, uneducated populations, is a much bigger challenge than the world has so far been willing to grapple with. He is concerned about debt relief, and about financial, and technology transfer to developing countries in order to meet a host of environmental, educational and health problems including control of HIV/AIDS.

What does all this suggest that a Kerry Administration would actually do? One factor of importance is the continuities with previous administrations in Kerry’s senior staff appointments. For example, Rand Beers, Kerry’s national and homeland security coordinator, served in the National Security Council staff under four previous administrations, including as Senior Director for Intelligence Programs from 1988 to 1998. His chief economic advisor is Roger Altman who was deputy secretary of the Treasury at the beginning of the Clinton presidency. Another senior economic advisor is
Gene Sperling, who was National Economic Advisor to President Clinton and head of the National Economic Council from 1996 to 2000. Circumstance, habit, tradition, and preference also create continuities.

All political leaders tend to concentrate on the issues that are prominent at the time they are campaigning and elected, often for longer than is necessary. It seems reasonable to expect that Kerry’s conduct of foreign policy would abandon the ideological extremism of Bush and his associates and return to mainstream positions. He says that soon after taking office he would go to the United Nations and begin ‘a proud new chapter in America’s relationship with the world.’ He is quoted in campaign publicity as saying ‘America deserves a principled diplomacy … backed by undoubted military might … based on enlightened self-interest … A bold progressive internationalism that focuses not just on the immediate and imminent, but on insidious dangers … from the denial of democracy, to destructive weapons, endemic poverty and epidemic disease.’

Like others who have experienced the horrors of war, Kerry would seek peaceful means of conflict resolution. He would lead America in active multilateral engagement. He would certainly concentrate more attention on the long-term political and economic development that would contribute to reducing the motivation for terrorism. He would maintain the national commitment to recovery in Iraq and Afghanistan. His instinct would be to strengthen the diplomatic effort to prevent nuclear proliferation, including by much more active negotiations with North Korea and Iran. Collective security and equitable development could well characterise a new administration’s orientations.

iii. National choices

In the future days which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour – anywhere in the world. That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

The Democratic Party has a rich tradition of internationalism, and FDR’s State of the Union Message on 6 January 1941, a month after Pearl Harbour, is a potent example. The vision of the four freedoms speaks not only to Americans but also to people
Every incoming government is constrained by the policies of its predecessor. Electorates and even commentators tend to assume that a newly elected government has wider choices than are in fact available to it. The external circumstances remain the same; consequences of the previous government’s actions continue; the pressures from interest groups that influenced the previous administration remain strong; the electorate is familiar with the ideology and policies of the previous government; and the defeated party is normally vigorous in attempting to defend its policies. On the other hand, a newly elected administration has articulated fresh policies and received a mandate to introduce them; its election increases hope amongst the majority of many changes, including the implementation of the promised policies; and many interest groups aggrieved by the previous administration’s policies will be pressing for changes to reflect their concerns. As well, the electoral climate in the US is probably far more intuitively sympathetic to the policies that Kerry is articulating than is generally recognised.

Kerry could well face a Republican-dominated Congress, as did President Clinton, though a Democrat victory in either house is possible. During 2004, Congress agreed to most of Bush’s requests. Like the whole nation, both houses of Congress are strongly polarised, making negotiation and compromise difficult. Nevertheless, a Kerry administration would be able to win some major battles in which it invests political capital, because Congress cannot afford to be completely obstructive and many of his policies have majority national support. Kerry could therefore appeal to the national electorate over the heads of Congress. Capacity to do that is always limited, so that a careful choice of issues would be essential, but he might well be able to win nationally on a number of major issues, as long as he sustained public support.

The poll evidence shows that the American electorate would welcome significantly different policies. They prefer peace to war. Writing about the way Americans see themselves, Bill Keller, now editor of The New York Times, says that ‘…our hearts are not in conquest. We want to be liked, and are surprised when we are not. We are inward looking, a little complacent, and we have been, at least since Vietnam, more than a little risk averse. When we go to war we go to win, but we don’t stick around. America put the hedge in hegemon.’

The Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland conducted a major research project on international policy attitudes in 1996. Steven Kull and I. M. Destler published the results in Misreading the Public in 1999. The survey is therefore eight years old and in the intervening period there has been a national trauma, a revolution in foreign policy and two wars, so results could be out of date and irrelevant. However there are strong continuities in personal attitudes (think of yourself), so, while the conclusions of the study must be used cautiously, they may still be relevant in
understanding the American electorate. Recent polls tend to confirm the results, as will be shown.

The University of Maryland research studied the question of whether US policymakers understand majority public attitudes about foreign policy. The study focused on the trend for international disengagement by the US during the nineties, as shown by the reduction in spending on international diplomacy, the US arrears to the UN, US resistance to contributing troops to UN peacekeeping and significant cuts in foreign aid. The majority of policymakers believed that this disengagement was an accommodation to community attitudes. The study involved detailed discussion with policymakers, a nationwide opinion poll, and polls in the districts of four members of Congress who had advocated US withdrawal from the UN.

The principal finding of the study was that while policymakers did indeed believe that the public wanted the US to disengage from the world, this was not the attitude of the majority of respondents. Two out of three Americans said that the US should be active in world affairs. The majority said that they wanted America to move away from the role of dominant world leader, or global sheriff. There were clearly feelings that the US was playing an excessively hegemonic international role. They also believed that the US did more than its fair share in international relations. ‘Most Americans want the United States not to withdraw but to put more emphasis on working together with other countries, especially through the UN.’ The basis for the view that the US did more than its fair share was extreme overestimation of how much it actually did.

A substantial majority of foreign policy practitioners believed that the American public was either negative or ambivalent about the UN. In fact a large majority of the public was supportive of the UN and ‘an overwhelming majority would like to see the UN strengthened.’ When given the choice of unilateral use of US military force or participation in a UN operation, there was overwhelming support for cooperating with the UN. Similarly, most Americans supported the principle of aiding developing countries. The most striking result of the survey relating to aid was that respondents over-estimated the amount given by the US by between 10 and 20 times. That is, the median estimate of the proportion of the US budget given as foreign aid was between 10 and 20 per cent in the various surveys, when in fact it was less than one per cent. When asked what proportion they thought it should be, the median response was five per cent, more than five times higher than the actual level.

This leads to the question of why there was such a gap between policymakers’ perceptions and public opinion. Part of the explanation is that attitudes are misinterpreted. Resistance to a hegemonic role for the United States can be interpreted as a preference for withdrawal, rather than for sharing the burden with other nations. The gap persists because voters do not generally give priority to international issues when deciding how to vote; domestic issues are more important to them. Congress members’ relative inattention to international matters may have been one of many factors adding to voters’ sense that policymakers inside the Washington beltway were out of touch. The authors conclude that ‘Americans do appear to have a sense of history, a recognition of
global interdependence, and a desire to see their nation make a meaningful contribution for both selfish and altruistic reasons.  

Surveys conducted since 9/11 show generally similar results. Respondents surveyed by the Pew Research Center just before September 11, were re-interviewed in mid-October 2001. As in 1996, in October 2001 nearly two out of three Americans thought that the US should be taking an active role in the world. The proportion who thought US policy makers should cooperate with allies rose from 48 per cent before 9/11 to 59 per cent afterwards. Support for multilateralism grew in both parties and amongst independents. Kenneth Pollack, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations commented that this ‘indicates that the American people are willing to be patient to allow diplomacy to take its course, and willing to accommodate the differing goals and interests of our allies.’ Not surprisingly, support for increased defence expenditure rose from 32 per cent to 50 per cent. There was a small increase in support for strengthening the United Nations, from 42 to 46 per cent.

Another Pew Research Center survey made in December 2002 showed a further small increase in support for American international engagement. Two-thirds of respondents said that the US should cooperate fully with the UN, up from 58 per cent before 9/11. Eighty-five per cent believed that the US should take into account the views of major allies. Much of the shift towards greater internationalism came from Republicans, and they became more multilateralist as well.

By September 2003, after the conflict in the UN Security Council and the Iraq war, fifty-five per cent of Americans still had a favourable view of the UN, though this was the lowest rating in the 14 years of Pew Center Surveys. (This was well below the favourable opinions of the UN in Western Europe – around 70 per cent – and Russia where they were 60 per cent.) Seven in ten Americans favoured a role for the UN in Iraq but only 44 per cent said that the UN should take the lead, 22 per cent preferring US control and 22 opposing any UN involvement. Fifty-nine per cent opposed Bush’s request for $87 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan. In March 2004, 60 per cent of Americans continued to back the war, and 84 per cent thought that the people of Iraq were better off than under Saddam Hussein.

This evidence shows that common sense generally prevails: the majority of Americans think that multilateral engagement is essential, and they recognise that this involves working through the UN. The practical reasons the US cannot reduce its insecurity alone are clear: not only is the cost too high but also proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot be contained by the US alone; and states export their disorder through criminal networks, uncontrolled migration, and the drugs trade as well as terrorism. So John Kerry may have judged well in placing the foreign policy chapter of his book ahead of those on domestic issues, particularly at the time of fear of terrorism.

As in other countries, the majority of people will vote with common sense if given enough accurate, relevant information. Most Americans, like citizens of most other countries, would prefer peaceful conflict resolution to war; fairness to injustice; and open
and accountable government to secretive manipulation. Yet some features of America inhibit effective foreign policy. The electorate has a short memory and short attention span. The lack of interest in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan once the Taliban had been defeated is a particularly clear example. Many voters find pleasure in the demonstration of power, but have little interest in accepting the responsibilities that follow. Americans tend to distrust complexity – in which they are also not alone – yet nuance and careful diplomacy are essential for successful foreign relations. (Note Bush’s comment that ‘I don’t do nuance.’) Domestic considerations will often over-rule international ones: the Bush Administration’s determination to transfer power in Iraq by mid-2004 was a commitment to a completely arbitrary target date set to minimise the electoral damage of the war during the presidential campaign. And finally, but most important, the balance of power between the President and Congress adds greatly to the complexity of decision making, and sometimes prevents consistency. So, in spite of much latent support for multilateral stances, there are a number of reasons why multilateral policies may not eventuate.

The surveys show that there is fertile ground for presentation of the case for multilateralism. The electorate can see that unilateralism provokes hostility and has enormous financial and other resource costs, that unilateralism is an expression of fantasy and multilateralism the counsel of realism. There is a clear contradiction between the neoconservatives’ views about US military dominance and general American belief in freedom and democracy. It is clear that deterring terrorism and easing conditions that breed terrorism require international cooperation. Multilateralism is a necessary condition for the safety and security of Americans and as well as for the safety and security of the rest of the world. The contradictions in Bush’s foreign policy are becoming clearer as the opposition to the American occupation of Iraq becomes more aggressive and violent. These contradictions may include the seeds of their own collapse. Many Americans have found the stigma of being an occupying power in Iraq unbearable. This is an uncomfortable position for a country founded after a revolution against a remote, unrepresentative government. ‘Imperialism and democracy are at odds with each other,’ wrote The Economist. ‘The one implies hierarchy and subordination, the other equality and freedom of choice. … Empire is simply not the American way.’

It is reasonable to hope, and even to expect that, when there is neglect of national values there will be a widespread reaction, leading to replacement of the perpetrators with others more genuinely committed to freedom, justice, and vitality.

The changes that a Kerry administration would make are sure to leave important aspects of American foreign policy unaddressed. It seems impossible for an American leader to avoid the national narcissism of viewing themselves as destined by Providence to lead the world. Overwhelming military dominance reinforces that belief in the minds of the narrowly nationalistic and the fearful. This enduring belief will continue a mindset that tends to ignore the views and sensibilities of other nations. Yet some Americans accept the rebuke of the prophet Reinhold Niebuhr that ‘…we are quickly acquiring the pride of power which always accompanies its possession.’ Mature American foreign policy experts recognise the delusion in thinking of their country as innocent and dispassionate. Even a sympathiser with American empire such as historian Niall
Ferguson writes that the US ‘unfailingly acts in the name of liberty, even when its own self-interest is manifestly uppermost.’

The pervasiveness of fear of external threats combined with the political strength of the military-industrial-academic complex, the parochial interests of members of Congress in maintaining military engagement in their districts, and community respect for the military will all help to ensure that military expenditure continues to be enormous. For one nation to be spending half the world’s military expenditure and a far higher proportion of its income than any other rich nation does suggest that there are peculiarities about the US – perhaps that Americans are more frightened than any other comparable nation. Eventually competition for resources will surely start to increase, and military expenditure be assessed more sceptically. A more intelligent approach would be to aim for modest superiority only, and so avoid stimulating fear, resentment, and retaliation from elsewhere. This could save vast resources.

Missile defence is a clear example. Immediately after September 11, there was a significant increase in community support for missile defence, from 56 to 64 per cent. Yet missile defence is irrelevant as protection against any known terrorist threat; only some of the tests undertaken so far have been successful; and many have failed. Missile defence is another of the neoconservative obsessions, about which they have so endlessly propagandised that even President Clinton would not take them on directly. There has not been a vigorous national debate about the issue since the Reagan years.

Missile defence remains effectively untested. In no test have anti-missile missiles had to combat the simple decoys that could readily be used by an enemy to defeat an exo-atmospheric kill vehicle (EKV). ‘In the real world B17s could not hit Japanese warships that were manoeuvring in unpredictable ways, and similarly our EKVs will not be able to destroy incoming warheads if the enemy uses countermeasures that we cannot know in advance,’ writes expert Steven Weinberg. Missile defence tends to hurt relations with allies – or to involve them in diverting more of their own resources into this wild goose chase – to discourage arms control and to encourage competitive research and development in China. Given these reservations, research on missile defence is waste. The current research program is $9 billion: deployment of missile defences around the US would cost several hundred billion. It is fanaticism to argue that this is essential, when the threat is so implausible. The neocons are living in a Star Wars world.

Washington scholar Anthony Cordesman writes that ‘In practice our challenge is to subordinate our arrogance to the end of achieving true partnership, and to shape our diplomacy to creating lasting coalitions of the truly willing rather than coalitions of the pressured or intimidated.’ Bill Clinton’s off-the-record comment in 2003 is pertinent: ‘The issue for America is whether it wants to struggle to continue to be top dog indefinitely, or whether it wants to create the kind of world in which it can be at ease when it is no longer top dog.’

To conclude, when fears of terrorism have declined further and reaction to the slaughter and destruction in Iraq is stronger, there may well be an opportunity for
policymakers to consider further proposals that could strengthen collective security and equitable development. Amongst them, though not necessarily in order of importance are:

- Reviewing military strategy and the huge military budget with a sceptical eye, to eliminate unnecessary and provocative programs, and operate others at levels better judged to fit requirements;
- Replacing asymmetrical support for Israel with a genuinely even-handed commitment to support of both Israel and Palestine and to peace making between them. Middle East peace is vital to peace with the Muslim world;
- Renewing commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty is already on the agenda but there is no talk of recognising the disarmament obligations of the nuclear states, yet that is crucial to the credibility of the treaty;
- Restoring commitment to other international treaties abandoned or neglected by the Bush Administration, such as membership of the International Criminal Court and positive participation in implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention;
- Increasing ODA, which is necessary to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals including halving of world poverty by 2015; and
- Participating actively in a review of multilateral conflict prevention, peace making, and peacekeeping, including consideration of establishment of a UN rapid deployment force.

The United States could choose cooperation over coercion; multilateralism over unilateralism; justice over indifference; respect for international opinion over defiance; defense over offence; containment and deterrence over prevention; diplomacy over force; peace over war.
Iva H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, Brookings, Washington, p


4 Carl Conetta, in *The Wages of War: Iraqi Combatant and Noncombatant Fatalities in the 2003 Conflict*, Commonwealth Institute, Cambridge, Mass, October 2003, estimates fatalities during the combat phase of the Afghan war at 3,000 to 4,000 Afghan combatants and 1,100 to 1,300 Afghan civilians.


10 Op cit, p 27.


12 Quoted by Brian Urquhart in ‘World Order and Mr Bush,’ *NYRB*, 9 October 2003.


14 George W. Bush has described this experience ‘You know, I had a drinking problem. Right now I should be in a bar in Texas, not the Oval Office. There is only one reason that I am in the Oval Office and not in a bar. I found faith. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer.’ Quoted by Joan Didion in the *NYRB*, 6 November 2003, from David Frum, *The Right Man*.


19 Eric Alterman and Mark Green, *op cit*, p188.

20 Suskind, *op cit*, p325.

21 Suskind, *op cit*, p58.

22 Ibid, p125.

23 Alterman and Green, *op cit*, p189-190.

24 Daalder and Lindsay, *op cit*, p21.

25 This is profoundly disturbing, suggesting not only a naïve and irresponsible approach to policy development, but also serious theological misunderstanding. Jesus replied to the question ‘Which commandment is the greatest?’ by saying, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ Matthew 22: 34-40. Neglect of the evidence, of analysis, of consideration about alternatives and of the search for well-judged decisions for the common good, involves failure to love God with all one’s mind.

26 Daalder and Lindsay, *op cit*, p125.

27 Ibid, p293.


29 Ibid, p149.


37 Daalder and Lindsay, op cit, pp 41-45.
40 Shorris, op cit, p 71.
41 Baker, op cit, p 37.
44 Ibid, p19.
49 Owen Harries, op cit, p 15.
51 Priest, ibid, p 40
53 David P. Calleo, ‘Transatlantic folly: NATO vs. the EU,’ World Policy Journal, Fall 2003, p 22.
56 Op cit p 80.
57 It is ironic that Osama bin Laden was supported for a while by the US, while it was campaigning against the Russians in Afghanistan.
58 Suskind, op cit, p190.
60 Richard A. Clarke, op cit, p 35.
62 Gareth Evans, ‘Why the war on terror is not going well,’ International Herald Tribune, 11 September 2003.
63 An important element in international counter-terrorism strategy is the work of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the Bank for International Settlement’s Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. The FATF is concentrating on two principal strategies: ‘The first is to improve regulation and supervision of informal payments mechanisms, such as alternative remittance systems, and of non-profit organisations, notably charities.’ The second is to improve co-operation and information sharing – both within individual countries and across national borders, among law enforcement agencies, supervisory authorities, financial intelligence units and other operational arms.
68 Glassner, op cit, p xv.


Anyone who doubts the relevance of this discussion to contemporary American foreign policy should read Kissinger’s *Diplomacy*. William Pfaff, a columnist for the *International Herald Tribune* writes: ‘The notion that the United States has an exemplary mission has always been central to American political thought and rhetoric. In Woodrow Wilson’s view (and that of many in the US today) this mission was divine in origin. Wilson (a president respected by today’s notably secular neoconservatives) held that the hand of God “has led us in this way,” and that we are the mortal instruments of His will – a view that has repeatedly found an echo in the discourse of George W. Bush. This sense of mission lies behind the American claim to an exceptional role in international society.’ *NYRB*, 8 April 2004.


Hughes, *op cit*, p 107.


Boston Times, 22 October 1847, quoted in Merk, *op cit*, p 122.


Brogan, *op cit*.


Brogan, *ibid*, p 69.


Merk, *op cit*, p 237.

Hughes, *op cit*.


Australian Bureau of Statistics, March, 2004. There were 1,972 indigenous Australians in prison per 100,000 of the indigenous population in December 2003.
On the day this was being written a process of selection was underway for a new Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The daily news summary from the IMF began with a report from The Wall Street Journal headed ‘US has decisive vote for next IMF chief.’ Europeans who have previously selected the head of the IMF, and those who had been campaigning for a more open and democratic selection process, including developing countries, would have been angry to read this. It reflects an American, and therefore IMF view of the role of the US. Christian Reus-Smit, ‘The misleading mystique of America’s material power,’ Australian Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 57, No. 3, November 2003, p 423.


113 Paul Krugman, The New York Times, 20 October 2002, 64. This article also reports that in 1998 the richest 13,000 families in the US received almost as much income as the 20 million poorest households.

114 Tocqueville, op cit, p 3.

115 Patrick McGehee in ‘Is CEO pay up or down? Both,’ The New York Times, 4 April 2004, Section 3, reports that for the 180 CEOs who held the same position in 2003 as in 2002, cash pay rose by 14.4 per cent, considerably higher than the increase in average wages between the years of 2 per cent, but the value of the stock options they received fell on average.

116 A feature of this surging inequality is the growth of American dynasties. Since the late 1970s, the top 0.1 per cent of income earners has increased its share by a factor of six. So wealthy people form dynasties. Bush has contributed to entrenching their position, and that of the dynasty from which he comes, through such policies as massive tax cuts for the wealthy.

117 Warren Buffet, assessed by Fortune to be the second most wealthy American and the most respected investment guru in the US, called, in his 2004 annual report to Hathaway shareholders, on Congress and the Bush Administration to ensure that American corporations pay their share of tax. ‘Tax breaks for corporations (and their investors, particularly large ones) were a major part of the 2002 and 2003 initiatives. If class warfare is being waged in America, my class is clearly winning,’ he wrote. He calculated that corporate income tax accounted for 7.4 per cent of all federal tax receipts in 2003, down from 32 per cent in 1952. Mr Buffet said that not enough businesses were paying close to the 35 per cent corporate tax rate. Excessive CEO remuneration is also an issue, he said. Corporate compensation committees do not pay enough attention to shareholder interests (or to the interests of employees or consumers).


122 Ikenberry, op cit, p153.
Nineteenth century migrants were often escaping deprivation and were far too apathetic and listless ‘to be stirred by the American dream.’ The trip from Europe before steam lasted two weeks during which ‘you were treated to a symbolic death, in a stinking wooden coffin, with the promise of an uncertain and hazardous resurrection,’ as Jonathan Raban writes. Most found no welcome, little support and struggled desperately to survive. Torn from the values and structures they understood, they found few certainties with which to replace them.


Serge Schmemann, Ibid.


Ikenberry, op cit.


Brzezinski, op cit, p 60.

Ibid, p 96.

Pfaff, op cit.


Nye, ibid.


Nye, ibid, p 138.


Nye, 2004, op cit, p 139.


Ibid, p 79.

Ibid, p 81.


This and the following information is from Larissa MacFarquhar, ‘The Populist: Michael Moore can make you cry,’ The New Yorker, 16 and 23 February 2004.

Moore, op cit, p 180.


Joe Klein, ‘The long war of John Kerry: can a Massachusetts Brahmin become President?,’ The New Yorker, 2 December 2002.


Kerry, ibid, p 24.

Jeffrey Toobin, ‘Kerry’s Trials,’ The New Yorker, 10 May 2004, p 54.

Toobin, ibid, p 61.
Judging how to reconcile conflicting pressures is a constant issue for politicians, because politicians have conflicting loyalties and all matter. All are ethically important and they commonly conflict. They are, not in order of importance because the ordering differs with each issue: loyalty to the voters who are represented; to the party of which he/she is a member; to colleagues in the legislature; and to values and principles in which she/he believes. Within electorates, there are wide differences of opinion and interest. Sincere people can hold diametrically opposed opinions. Even when trying to discern the common good, difficult choices are often involved about which position to represent. Sometimes the conflict is not severe and can be resolved through careful study of an issue. Frequently a compromise is possible which takes account of most or all concerns. There are many issues where this is not possible and a choice between competing priorities is required. Politicians are sometimes condemned for voting in ways that will please sections of their electorates, but which are contrary to their personal beliefs. Yet it is their responsibility to represent as well as to lead. If they are habitually inattentive to the opinions of their voters, they not only risk losing their seat but also would do so because they betrayed the trust of the people who voted for them. It is reasonable to expect, however, that candidates will truthfully indicate their values and orientation about key issues so that voters can have sufficient information to make a well-informed decision.


Steven Kull and I M Destler, Misreading the Public: the myth of the new isolationism, Brookings, 1999.

Kenneth M. Pollack, Commentary on Pew Research Center, ibid.


The Economist, 16 August 2003, p21.

Niebuhr, op cit, p 38.

Quoted by Brian Urquhart in NYBR, 9 October 2003, from Niall Ferguson, Empire, Basic Books.
