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## International Relations Theory Meets World Politics

### *The Neoconservative vs. Realism Debate*

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The Bush Doctrine has been defined very differently by different scholars and commentators. The Bush administration itself has used the term narrowly, to describe “the policy that nations harboring terrorists would be treated as if they were guilty of terrorist acts.”<sup>1</sup> Others define it almost exclusively in terms of preventive war.<sup>2</sup> Robert Jervis and Robert Lieber identify the Doctrine with four more or less comparable components: the belief that domestic regimes—democracy vs. authoritarianism—drive a country’s foreign policy and thus a goal of democratizing other countries, especially in the Middle East; the perception that grave threats are best dealt with by vigorous measures like preemptive and preventive war; a commitment to multilateralism conditional on efficacy, as such, a stated willingness to act unilaterally; and a goal of maintaining U.S. primacy based on the belief that America has a unique role in causing international peace and stability.<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this volume, the Bush Doctrine consists of four similar themes: the maintenance of U.S. primacy, selective multilateralism, stand-apart alliances, and democratization, especially in the Middle East. The doctrine was laid out in the administration’s 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS), President George W. Bush’s 2002 speech at West Point, and his 2003 speech at the National Endowment for Democracy (the 2006 NSS amplifies and updates, rather than revises, the 2002 NSS).<sup>4</sup>

However it is defined, the Bush Doctrine and neoconservative thinking are said to diverge sharply from the other major schools of foreign policy thought, especially realism.<sup>5</sup> This chapter argues, in contrast, that the Bush Doctrine is not nearly so radical a departure. The Bush Doctrine foreign policy shares core ontological assumptions with major streams of realist thought, varies in several subassumptions, and adds a very small number of supplementary assumptions to the mix. As in all theoretical matters, devils can easily lurk in these details, but details are the measure of the distance separating these approaches within the broad realist tradition. Specifically, the neoconservative,

foreign policy thinking embodied in the Doctrine is a variant of realism, specifically a variant of a variant of realism, “balance-of-threat” realism.

Mounting this rebellious argument is made difficult by the fact that the Doctrine has been the target of much overheated analysis. And an impression of rupture with the past is encouraged by an understandable focus on those aspects of the Bush administration’s foreign policy that are especially innovative, a focus that obscures or ignores outright the overwhelming continuities in U.S. foreign policy. The major continuities include the persistent emphasis on traditional deterrence, basic post-1945 immigration policy, foreign trade policy, foreign aid, membership and activism in numerous international organizations, and the broad contours of workaday policy toward Russia, China, India, South East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America (countries representing more than half the world’s population). Much of the talk about a “revolution” in foreign policy is much ado about nothing. In particular, the departure from the realist tradition is overblown.

### The Varieties of Realism

Realism is a powerful analytic perspective, made up of a series of assumptions about how states and the international system work. By varying major and minor assumptions, scholars have produced many distinct variants of this intellectual tradition. A few major assumptions seem definitional to realism.<sup>6</sup> First, realists assume that the international system lacks a central authority and that individual states are the system’s primary actors. Second, in this anarchic context, all states are centrally concerned with their safety and survival, and set about trying to secure them in the most efficient way they know how. Third, whether for that security-seeking reason or as the result of predatory agendas, states sometimes have territorial ambitions on other states and are prepared to use force to act on them.

These core assumptions go a long way to establishing a way of seeing the world. But they do *not* specify a number of things. Among other issues, this “minimalist realism” does not specify exactly how countries do or should measure levels of threat to their safety or survival. It does not identify the most effective strategies for addressing a given level of threat. It does not specify exactly how states do or should feel about interstate cooperation. It does not identify all the effects of international institutions, concerning for example whether they can solve coordination problems or can develop emergent properties. And minimalist realism explains virtually nothing about the behavior of nonstate actors.

Different variants of realist thinking are distinguished by the supplementary assumptions they add to minimalist realism to address these and other issues. The most familiar debates are between neorealists, liberal institutionalists, balance-of-threat realists, and neoconservatives. Variations in sub-assumptions ensure that many thinkers are not easily contained by one or

another of these schools. But we can usefully, if crudely, summarize major cleavage lines on the issues of threat assessment and regime type; deterrence and preventive use of force; and U.S. primacy and international institutions.

**Neorealism.** Neorealists like Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, and Robert Gilpin add several assumptions to minimalist realism.<sup>7</sup> They assume that states best judge threats by measuring the relative power of other states. States will try to deter potential expansionists by balancing against power, through mobilization or alliances, or both. Because states fear power, they fear powerful states regardless of domestic regime characteristics. No “democratic peace” is to be expected, and even fellow democracies are prone to balancing against the United States (though Waltz and Mearsheimer differ somewhat on the U.S. case for reasons discussed below). Because states jealously guard power and sovereignty, international institutions can provide a useful forum for states already committed to cooperation, but cannot, as creatures of states, become reliable independent sources of security.<sup>8</sup> Finally, neorealism does not have “a whole heck of a lot” to say about terrorism because it is carried out by nonstate actors on whom realism sheds no particular analytic light.<sup>9</sup>

**Balance-of-Threat Realism.** Stephen Walt crafted a variant of realism when he argued that threats to a given state are better measured by measurement of other states’ intentions as well as their capabilities.<sup>10</sup> This balance-of-threat (as opposed to balance-of-power) assumption generates the distinctive prediction that states may balance as much against, say, the aggressive agenda of a middling state as the less threatening behavior of a larger one. Since perceived intentions matter, a state might influence how it is perceived, for example, by convincing others that it harbors no expansionist ambitions. Like neorealism, balance-of-threat realism offers no analytic tools for deducing what generates threats from nonstate actors.

Balance-of-threat realism is compatible with certain “liberal” and institutional claims about international relations (though much liberal and institutionalist thought is nonrealist in nature). First, the empirical record appears to indicate that states governed democratically manifest less threatening intentions toward one another, creating the basis for the “democratic peace.”<sup>11</sup> By this standard, democracies should be unlikely to balance against a fellow democracy like America. Similarly, international institutions might influence outcomes by helping to create or signal less threatening intentions. For example, Walt and G. John Ikenberry argue that institutions can be an effective method of restraining—and signaling the restraint—even of powerful states like the post-Cold War United States, reducing the chances that others will fear and balance against them.<sup>12</sup>

**Neoconservatism.** Finally, neoconservatives also believe that threats arise from intentions as well as capabilities. For this reason they steer security concerns away from states that are powerful but deemed nonhostile (Japan, Western Europe, India) and toward states with perceived hostile intentions,

whether large (China) or middling (Iran). Specifically, neoconservatism adopts the assumption that domestic regime type is the best indicator of intentions, with democracies judged more peaceful. After 9/11, neoconservatives added the claim that nondemocracies threaten other states not only directly but also indirectly, by incubating terrorism. To deal with threats, neoconservatism adopts neorealist assumptions about international institutions. And neoconservatives argue, distinctively, that not only nonstate actors but also certain states may not be responsive to traditional deterrence.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, neoconservatives are balance-of-threat realists with several supplementary assumptions: that institutions exert negligible independent effects (shared with neorealists); that domestic regime type profoundly shapes a state's intentions (shared with democratic-peace liberals); that regime type affects whether a state generates terrorists; and that certain states might not be easily deterrable (the latter two being claims on which the other approaches do not pronounce). The remaining sections draw four major themes from this summary: how the Bush Doctrine measures threats; how it proposes to deal with threats; what role international institutions play in its strategies; and its long-term strategy of democratization.

### Measuring Threats by Regime Type

#### *Measuring Threats and Risks*

The Bush Doctrine is said to assess threats to U.S. security in ways that sharply diverge from traditional methods, above all by tracing threats to nondemocratic regimes. This section elaborates the Doctrine's approach to this foundational aspect of national security policy.

For all variants of realism, how to identify and measure threats is a non-obvious and controversial task. Neorealists measure potential threats by measuring each country's power. As Waltz puts it, "State behavior varies more with differences of power than with differences in ideology, in internal structure of property relations, or in governmental form."<sup>14</sup> But how should we measure power? We could measure a state's mobilized military forces, but more often scholars measure total latent power resources. In many studies, latent resources are measured parsimoniously by each country's population and economic wealth.<sup>15</sup> So a given state could be less threatened by a large poor country than by a medium-sized rich one. Mearsheimer adds a geographic feature to this short list of measures of latent power, on the grounds that power-projection is profoundly affected by the "stopping power of water."<sup>16</sup> In this thinking, a state could be more threatened by a nearby, medium-sized poor country than by a large rich one an ocean away.

While many realists take it for granted, this focus on power alone is a striking analytic choice. It is informed by the assumption that a country should base its security strategy on an assessment of how dangerous another country

would be were the two to find themselves at war, without explicit concern for the probability of war breaking out. In this, realism is very different from most other applications of rational choice theory (of which realism has become a kind). These other forms (whether parametric or game theoretic), assume instead that actors base strategies on their assessment of risks, which are measured by both the *effects* of a given event (say, a war, drought, or election defeat) were it to occur and the *probability* that that event will occur. Applied to the case at hand, this would mean that a state, to assess the threat posed by another, would assess both how powerful that potential adversary is *and* the likelihood that the two states will come to blows. The latter at least partly involves the other state's intentions, though the two are not coterminous. Neorealists assume that "states can never be certain about other states' intentions."<sup>17</sup> The implication is that states should accordingly prepare for the worst at all times, virtually regardless of the short- and medium-term costs of this form of "insurance." But uncertainty characterizes most of political, social, and economic life, and yet most rational choice theorists nonetheless assume that actors select strategies in part by making their best guesses about what others are likely to do. If actors could not and did not make such guesses, game theory would make no sense, at least outside games of chance with fixed odds.<sup>18</sup>

This alternative and common practice within the rational choice tradition is more consistent with balance-of-threat realism's measurement of threats based on a mix of a state's intentions and capabilities. But can the intentions half of this mix be measured, and can it be measured as parsimoniously as power? Walt does not provide simple measures of intentions, arguing instead that contexts vary in the degree to which credible information about other states' intentions is available and offering ad hoc coding of certain regimes (like Nasser's in Egypt) as threatening.<sup>19</sup> Such coding has a lengthy history. Many have traced security threats disproportionately to a subset of governments distinguished by expansionist militarism. This approach has analytic risks. If we identify regimes as "threatening" based on their expansionist behavior, we cannot know whether this behavior is better explained by domestically derived "intentions" or by the systemic factors proposed by neorealists (for example, an imbalance of power favorable to a bid for regional hegemony). The best way of sorting these competing predictions is to control for distributions of power and then ask if a given country behaves substantially differently under successive domestic regimes. Balance-of-threat realism is meaningful only if the answer is "yes," at least sometimes.

#### *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Democratic Peace*

If domestic factors help explain why some countries are more threatening than others, then which domestic factors matter? The Bush Doctrine is understood to distinctively emphasize domestic regime types. But in fact,

regime-based analyses of threats have been invoked repeatedly in the making of modern U.S. foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> U.S. policy in both World War II and the Cold War was not centrally to reduce the latent power of Germany, Japan, or the Soviet Union (say, by dismembering them) but to change their intentions by transforming their domestic political orders. This assumed that new regimes could be less threatening, including because different regimes would mobilize less latent power. Thus, major Cold War documents traced the threat posed by the USSR at least as much to the nature of its regime—“ideology” for George Kennan; “fanatic faith” in NSC-68 as to Russia’s innate capabilities. In this spirit, later Cold Warriors generally coded threats by distinguishing between states with totalitarian regimes and all others, with the “free world” containing many authoritarian regimes. For example, Jeane Kirkpatrick famously warned of totalitarian regimes while suggesting that the U.S. could view many other nondemocratic regimes relatively benignly. And Ronald Reagan’s celebrated 1982 Westminster speech cast the global struggle not as between all democracies and all nondemocracies, but as one between “free” countries and expansionist totalitarianism in particular.<sup>21</sup>

After the Cold War, the United States under George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton continued to scrutinize countries by their intentions as much as their capabilities. This took two forms. The first invested special concern in an especially violence-prone subset of nondemocracies labeled “rogue states.” The second was quite different. Claims of a “democratic peace” shifted threat assessment regarding interstate conflicts to a new cut-point: the one separating all democracies from all nondemocracies. This, alongside deeper philosophical roots, is the most immediate ancestor of neoconservative thinking about measuring threats.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, U.S. foreign policy since 2001 makes important short-term distinctions between less vs. more hostile nondemocratic regimes, as seen in America’s antiterrorist cooperation with nondemocratic Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and North African countries such as Algeria in the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative. But more generally, neoconservatives adopt the same cut-point as democratic peace theorists, and the Bush Doctrine reflects this. It does so in part by echoing the democratic-peace thesis about the sources of interstate threats. But al-Qaeda’s 2001 attack also elevated threats from nonstate actors, and neoconservatives and some neoliberals have proposed a complementary thesis that might be called the “authoritarian radicalization” thesis.<sup>23</sup> This argues that nondemocratic regimes are additionally problematic to U.S. national security because they, often inadvertently, incubate violent extremism among their citizens.<sup>24</sup> In a 2003 speech, Bush said that nondemocratic regimes in the Middle East bred “stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export.”<sup>25</sup> His 2004 State of the Union speech was even more specific: “As long as the Middle East remains a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will continue to produce men and movements that threaten the safety of

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America and our friends.”<sup>26</sup> While the Bush administration also emphasizes the causal importance of terrorist organizations and their emergent properties, the idea of radicalization under authoritarianism is a “root causes” theory of terrorism in all but name. As traditional realists David Hendrickson and Robert Tucker put it, “Now it is the ‘being’ and not the ‘doing’ of autocratic states that creates the security threat to the United States.”<sup>27</sup>

This version of balance-of-threat realism basically codes states’ intentions by the proxy of a state’s democratic vs. nondemocratic status. Like all methods of coding threats, this creates categories of states deemed both threatening and nonthreatening. For neorealists, less threatening states are ones with limited capabilities, that is, ones with small populations and/or small economies and perhaps ones located a body of water away. For balance-of-threat realists, nonthreatening states are ones with status quo intentions. The post-Cold War version of balance-of-threat realism, as expressed in the democratic-peace and authoritarian-radicalization theses, identifies democracies as the quintessential status quo powers. This is reinforced by the unusual post-Cold War spectacle of the world’s major powers—mostly democracies—being durably at peace with one another. It is in that spirit that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice wrote in 2005 that “the fundamental character of regimes matters more today than the international distribution of power.”<sup>28</sup> For that matter, terrorists are considered threatening only because their very limited capabilities are harnessed to very aggressive intentions. And “failed states” are of concern not because of their (minimal) capabilities, but because of the violent intentions of substate and nonstate actors who can flourish in them.

By measuring threats based on actors’ intentions as well as their capabilities, and by using democratic status to code intentions, the Bush Doctrine adopts the central insight of balance-of-threat realism and adds to it the supplementary assumption that regime type crucially structures the behavior of both states and nonstate actors.

### **Deterrence, Preemption, and Prevention**

Whatever the sources of security threats, the perennial question remains: What should the United States do about threats that arise in the foreseeable future? Neorealism and balance-of-threat realism provide ample grounds for relying on traditional strategies such as power-balancing and deterrence. It is a common perception that the Bush Doctrine instead proposes to deal with threats preventively. Certainly the Bush administration’s discussion of preventive war has been the Doctrine’s most controversial feature. At first blush, the preventive use of force seems to be a major innovation. But closer inspection shows that the role that the Bush Doctrine assigns to prevention does not constitute such a radical departure from realism after all. This is the case for two reasons.

*The Durability of Deterrence*

First, the Doctrine does not suggest that all, most, or even many threats should be dealt with preventively. Some scholars, like Daalder and Lindsay, say that Bush's security strategy elevated prevention as a central new tool and "effectively abandoned a decades-long consensus that put deterrence and containment at the heart of American foreign policy."<sup>29</sup> But Lindsay and Daalder had earlier concluded that "[d]eterrence features prominently" in the 2002 NSS, that "[p]reemption has a total of three paragraphs in a 31-page document," and that "the strategy, for all the talk publicly about preemption, in addition is a fairly narrow goal for preemption."<sup>30</sup> These earlier observations are closer to the mark. The 2002 NSS notes that deterrence both has worked and does work against states, so long as they are risk-averse, and twice says specifically that the U.S. can "deter" certain states already in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It concludes only that the United States can "no longer *solely* rely" on deterrence (or in the 2006 NSS, "no longer *simply* rely" on it). The 2002 NSS thus proposes that preventive force is not needed against all emerging threats, only against risk-tolerant rogue states and stateless terrorist groups.<sup>31</sup> Rice has insisted that the number of cases to which preemption or prevention applies "will always be small," while more traditional tools remain highly appropriate. So, she insists, the 2002 NSS "does not overturn five decades of doctrine and jettison either containment or deterrence."<sup>32</sup>

This emphasis seems not simply rhetorical since it is consistent with the architecture of U.S. security policy since 2001. The 2004 U.S. "National Military Strategy" refers over two dozen times to the core U.S. strategy of "detering" or "dissuading" aggression.<sup>33</sup> America has continued to invest heavily in the military capabilities required by such a strategy. It is fairly evidently pursuing a policy of deterrence toward specific potential adversaries such as North Korea (with U.S. troops in South Korea) and China (with the shift of U.S. forces from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the rapprochement between the U.S. and regional counterweight India, and talk of "containing" China). Against this expensive and extensive backdrop, the U.S. has used preventive coercion in only one case so far. In all these ways, the Bush administration's workaday policies appear to rely heavily on traditional practices.

There is a second reason to conclude that discussion of the use of preventive force in a minority of cases does not represent a radical departure from traditional realist thought. Many find the proposal of any preventive use of force controversial because they believe that it is either unnecessary or inadvisable. The remainder of this section argues that even a realist can conclude that this might not be true under certain very limited circumstances. If deterrence makes compelling sense in most circumstances but not in some very limited ones, then considering the use of preventive force in those few exceptions does not seem especially radical.

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*The Presumption Against Preventive Use of Force*

Several assumptions underpin the proposition that traditional security strategies like deterrence are preferable to the preventive use of force. These assumptions rest on the durable realist language of costs and benefits. In sum, preventive war is understood to have several important disadvantages and few obvious advantages. Prevention has three main disadvantages. First, the preventive use of force could initiate a war that was unnecessary, since a given adversary might never have ended up attacking after all. Because wars are costly and risky, unnecessary ones are a highly undesirable type 1 error (a false positive). Second, even if an adversary *has* entertained plans for an attack, it might successfully be deterred. Since deterrence appears to be routinely effective in international politics, preventive war seems a costly alternative. Third, a state that uses force preventively risks an additional cost beyond that of the war itself: it risks being seen (or mistaken) as an aggressor, and thus risks provoking balancing behavior against itself. Often, better that the other side fires the first shot.

Moreover, despite discussion of “the cult of the offensive,” the advantage of preventive war (being the first to strike) may not be especially valuable, especially to a power as secure as the United States. Even if an adversary does wish to attack and cannot successfully be deterred, it may still be preferable to absorb the initial blow since the costs of doing so are usually limited. The attacked state is usually able to respond. It goes without saying that it knows against whom to retaliate. And initial attacks are unlikely to be devastating because they are unlikely to come as complete surprises. Most countries can suffer a major attack only at the hands of a relatively small number of other states, whose preparations for war are typically evident even if not transparent in every detail. In Richard Betts’ words, “Pure bolts from the blue do not happen. Sudden attacks occur after prolonged political conflict.”<sup>34</sup> For all these reasons, it is usually preferable to eschew preventive use of force.

But what if circumstances arise such that one or more of these underlying assumptions does not hold? In other words, how should a cost-benefit analysis judge the preventive use of force if two actors are already at war or an adversary is manifestly bent on attack; or if a specific adversary does not seem to respond to normal methods of deterrence; or if other countries seem uninterested in balancing against oneself; or if absorbing an attack might not leave a state fully capable of responding effectively?

Let us consider these possibilities. First, concerns about initiating an unnecessary war are moot if a conflict is already under way. That now applies to any attack directly on al-Qaeda, even if in a new form or venue. The Bush administration argues that it may also apply in some form to a case like Iraq, because the line between a new vs. already-existing conflict has been unusually blurred since 9/11. Certainly the United States is involved in an unusual

conflict. Because of the stateless and loosely organized nature of violently anti-American Islamists, their attacks can emanate from a remarkably diffuse geography; such attacks can take on many forms, and they could acquire weapons and other assistance from a very wide array of sources, not limited only to states. This explains why Western countries have engaged in such an unusually wide range of policies since 9/11, from military action in Afghanistan and the continued securing of ex-Soviet nuclear materials to enhanced computer security and stepped-up defenses against biological weapons. So in this unusually diffuse struggle, what is a new conflict? This is not a novel situation. Consider whether Allied military action against Francoist Spain during World War II would have initiated a new war or would simply have opened a new front in a war already under way against the Axis. The answer is not self-evident. In that light, was an attack on Saddam's regime an entirely innovative act, or a new front in an already-initiated war between America and extremism emanating from the Mideast, including Saddam's brand of it?<sup>35</sup> For that matter, which would an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities be?

*"Nondeterrability"*

Second, what if an adversary is bent on attack and seemingly cannot be deterred? The arguments that follow concerning "detterrability" have been rehearsed elsewhere by others, but are worth repeating and developing. International relations scholars have long debated what is required for deterrance to be effective.<sup>36</sup> At the very least, it requires a credible threat of costly retaliation and a sufficiently cost-sensitive adversary. Realism generally assumes the second condition is fulfilled, and attributes any failures (to deter) to the absence of the first.<sup>37</sup> This appears to describe accurately a great many situations. But since 9/11, both assumptions may be experiencing not general but "spotty" failures. Recognizing this merely updates rather than repudiates realism's analytic assumptions.

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The first condition for effective deterrance—that a state like the U.S. can credibly threaten retaliation—may not be holding in all instances. This is not because America lacks sufficient military resources, but because it could now be attacked and not know against whom to retaliate. This is rarely a problem when one country directly attacks another. It has also not been a problem with terrorists who leave fingerprints or claim credit for attacks. But it has already proven problematic when terrorists strike without leaving much of a trail. Al-Qaeda appears to have a policy of not claiming credit. This does not necessarily prevent its actions from being traced. But the possibility of anonymity is not fanciful. The 2001 anthrax attack in America lacks a single publicly identified suspect, and a number of major bombings remain not just unclaimed but unattributed. Consider the number of groups that might happily detonate a nuclear device in Tel Aviv without claiming credit. Proliferation lengthened the list of actors potentially armed with WMDs to more states and also to

nonstate actors. Historically, attacks could be (relatively) unexpected; now they could be mysterious.

Related but distinct is the much-imagined scenario in which a rogue state “hands off” a WMD, especially a nuclear or radiological weapon. Then, an attacked country might retain ample retaliatory capacities and identify its terrorist attackers, but not know with a high level of confidence which state provided the weapon. As the columnist Charles Krauthammer has said, deterrence “does not work against...undetected: nonsuicidal enemy regimes that might attack through clandestine means.”<sup>38</sup> Some consider a WMD handoff unlikely because it would be highly risky for the rogue state involved.<sup>39</sup> This skepticism assumes, first, that a weapon will be traceable to its source. But we are still asking: where did the 2001 anthrax come from? It also assumes that rulers are, broadly speaking, risk-averse. Is that the case?

The second condition for effective deterrence is adversaries who are sensitive to costs and risks. This condition might usually be borne out and yet fail in certain narrow instances. In that minority of cases, deterrence could fail not because of the (inadequate) credibility or preparations of the would-be deterrer but because of the nature of the attacker. It is obviously not clear that “cost-sensitivity” describes all terrorist groups. It surely describes some, who can be deterred at least sometimes and in some regards.<sup>40</sup> But it may well not describe others. Even a traditional realist like Owen Harries says that compared, for example, to the cautious, calculating rulers of the Soviet Union, “[f]lying two aircraft into those towers in New York is an animal of a different breed.”<sup>41</sup>

Some “rogue states” may also be of a different breed. The claim here is not that rogue state leaders are psychotic or suicidal, only that there is no a priori reason to assume that leaders are homogenous in their cost-sensitivity and risk-tolerance. They may well vary on those dimensions. Stalin, Hitler, Kim Jong-Il, and Saddam Hussein seem especially unpreoccupied by the deaths of hundreds of thousands (or millions) of their own citizens. And Napoleon, Hitler, and some other rulers manifest high-risk tendencies in their foreign policies.<sup>42</sup> This might be because they are prone to perceiving other states as unlikely to display resolve or as unlikely to prevail in a conflict. And tyrants with such proclivities may have few effective checks on their personal decision making. Lieber argues that such high risk-tolerance may make a small number of regimes not easily susceptible to deterrence.<sup>43</sup>

We can briefly consider two cases. The most extensively debated is Saddam Hussein.<sup>44</sup> The claim that Hussein was deterrable is difficult to reconcile with several of his major decisions. Why was he alone in taking military advantage of Iran’s vulnerability in 1980 and Kuwait’s in 1990? Regardless of what Hussein stood to gain through control of Kuwait, including possibly deflecting domestic challenges to his regime, why was he confident the world would not react with overwhelming force to his 1990 threat to major oil supplies? Why did he refuse to withdraw from Kuwait once that reaction became apparent?

Withdrawal at that time may have posed risks to his rule, but why was he confident his regime could better survive the confrontation? And above all, regardless of theories about 1980 and 1990–91, why was Hussein unwilling to do whatever was needed to save his throne in 2002–03, whatever domestic and international risks he would have had to run to do so? Many proffered answers to these questions remain unpersuasive.<sup>45</sup>

Another, woefully understudied, case is the Taliban. If that regime's rulers were bent on survival, why did they allow the 9/11 plot against the world's most powerful state to proceed from their territory? And why did they not accept the ultimatum offered by Bush immediately after the attack?<sup>46</sup> Conceivably, the Taliban did not know about the 9/11 plot beforehand and/or lacked the coercive capacity either to stop it then or to turn over al-Qaeda's leaders afterward. In any of those cases, though, classic deterrence faces a new problem: How is deterrence supposed to work if some states cannot control threatening events originating in their territories?<sup>47</sup>

Jervis makes the more general point that the Bush administration's strategy (of coercive diplomacy against rogue states that might hand off WMDs) is based on the assumption that the U.S. understands how its adversaries think. He argues that this assumption is flawed, since adversaries often make decisions that U.S. decision makers find puzzling. This is a fair point. But its prescriptive teeth are drawn the moment we realize that it applies just as much to a strategy of deterrence, a strategy that also assumes we know how our adversaries think. If the adversaries are unpredictable or puzzling, then deterrence may be as risky or ineffective a strategy as a more intrusive one. In the end, deterrence appears to be effective against most actors. But there are legitimate questions about how effective it is against a very narrow set of them.

Against some of these actors, a policy of deterrence may be doomed from the start. If certain "rogue" rulers are especially risk-tolerant or convinced of the weakness or lack of resolve of major democracies, then status quo states may have to resort to strategies other than deterrence, at least deterrence as traditionally practiced. This might mean preventive use of force. But it could instead mean flamboyant displays of resolve, ostentatiously and overwhelmingly favorable constellations of forces or, as Jacques Chirac's France has mounted, threats to respond with highly disproportionate force.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Let Them Fire the First Shot?*

But even if certain adversaries can't be deterred, wouldn't it still be wiser for the United States to absorb an initial blow than to engage in provocative behavior that might scare others? Neorealists and balance-of-threat realists have argued that America's power and muscular behavior could easily or will inevitably provoke—or indeed already have provoked—balancing against itself. It hardly furthers U.S. national security goals to provoke balancing behavior against itself by persuading other states that America is an aggressor.

This is not a concern for neorealism, which predicts that others will inevitably balance against the U.S. because of its power and regardless of its behavior.<sup>49</sup> But balance-of-threat realism suggests that a power would be wise not to be seen as threatening, and Walt and Robert Pape argue that U.S. behavior after 9/11 risks just that.<sup>50</sup>

But to be persuasive, these critiques have to pass two tests. First, it is a core realist proposition that avoiding balancing behavior is not a state's overriding goal. Consider an action that advances a state's security vis-à-vis a given threat but provokes a certain amount of balancing by third parties. Whether the action is advisable is still up for debate, subject to the cost-benefit analysis emphasized by realism. Different members of the realist family can legitimately assess such a situation somewhat differently.<sup>51</sup>

Second, whether a given strategy *is* even provoking balancing behavior is an empirical question. As it happens, claims that the Bush Doctrine is threatening to other states and provoking them to balance against the U.S. are unpersuasive. Since 9/11, most major powers, although they have the material resources to do so, have not responded to U.S. policies with the defensive military buildups characteristically pursued by states that perceive an acute threat. Instead, they have maintained pre-9/11 spending levels or even continued to reduce them. Alliance patterns have remained similarly stable rather than rearranging into new coalitions designed to block Washington. And claims of "soft balancing" have so far not revealed truly new behavior beyond historically routine diplomatic friction. For example, displays of anti-Americanism do not seem much different from those of the early 1980s, when scholars are agreed that other states were *not* balancing against the U.S. This lack of balancing might be because America is an "offshore balancer" an ocean away from other major powers, or because the vast majority of states seem to believe that the United States harbors no aggressive intentions toward them to begin with. Whichever it is, the evidence suggests that balancing behavior is being foregone except by isolated states like Iran and North Korea.<sup>52</sup>

I am not arguing here that other major powers *ought* not to see the U.S. as threatening. I am saying that they are acting as if they *do* not see it as threatening. It is a strange hegemon that regularly urges other great powers to spend more, not less, on their militaries. It is an even stranger set of fearful other states that spend no more, and often less, on their militaries as time goes on.

Finally, it is normally tolerable to absorb an initial attack rather than act preventively because the attacked state typically retains retaliatory capabilities. To revisit the issue: What happens if this is not the case? To repeat, this would not be because America would be overwhelmed. Tiny Israel risks being annihilated by a surprise attack, explaining why it has resorted to preventive and preemptive strikes. But as Francis Fukuyama insists, "Unlike Israel, the United States has a substantial margin of strategic depth."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the 2002 NSS noted that rogue states and terrorists do not "rival the sheer destructive power that was

arrayed against us by the Soviet Union.<sup>54</sup> Islamist extremists do not possess the ability to occupy even a sliver of Western territory. And we now know that even an attack like 9/11 leaves intact America's capabilities of response.

Instead, the new risk is twofold. We have already considered the first: the possibility that terrorists could strike anonymously or with untraceable weapons. When this is the case, absorbing an initial blow, even a catastrophic one, could be the prelude not to effective retaliation but instead to simply absorbing further blows. The second compelling danger is that an attack, instead of mimicking 9/11, will involve a biological or especially nuclear weapon. Waltz argues that one of "the two biggest changes in international politics" after World War II was the dramatic shift in "the extent and rapidity with which some states can hurt others" as a result of the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>55</sup> That change has only accelerated with further proliferation, and John Lewis Gaddis observes that "terrorists can now inflict levels of destruction that only states wielding military power used to be able to accomplish."<sup>56</sup> We can consider scenarios in which cities like Chicago or Washington, DC, are severely damaged by actors against whom the U.S. did not act sufficiently.

While false positives in these matters (unnecessary wars) are costly, type 2 errors (false negatives) have become much more costly with the development of nonconventional weapons. This has hardly gone unnoticed by the Bush administration: "weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations."<sup>57</sup> It is no coincidence that the leading previous example of American preventive use of force, the 1962 "quarantine" of Cuba, was directed against nuclear weapons. The downside to letting the other side take the first shot, then, is that the shot might be much more severe than 9/11 and leave the U.S. to retaliate against an unknown target.

If any of these exceptional circumstances arise, or some combination of them, then even a realist perspective emphasizing the cautious calculation of costs and benefits might conclude that in one or more of these narrow circumstances, preventive use of force is in fact advisable. In other words, the broad realist tradition does not seem to offer grounds for rigorously eschewing a highly selective preventive use of force if an adversary has already attacked you, is exceedingly difficult to deter, and could do severe damage in ways that make retaliation difficult, and balancing behavior is unlikely to result. In that sense, the Bush Doctrine's proposal that prevention be used in just such circumstances does not obviously represent the violation of realist thinking that some of its critics suggest. Above all, the Doctrine suggests that deterrence is appropriate when conventional circumstances are present. Gaddis' conclusion appears apt: the "Bush Doctrine does not reject deterrence and containment. It does, however, insist upon the need to supplement these familiar strategies with preemption."<sup>58</sup> If neoconservatives depart from realists in these matters, it is primarily at the level of area of focus rather than of analytic principles. For example, neoconservatives do not consider possible deterrence failures

in ways that repudiate realist assumptions so much as they consider whether deterrence might fail for reasons that most neorealists have not focused on.

### American Primacy, Multilateralism, and Unilateralism

The Bush Doctrine's emphasis on the maintenance of U.S. primacy and its orientation toward international institutions both fit within the realist tradition. The Bush Doctrine shares ground with many, not all, realists regarding U.S. primacy. Most obviously, realism assumes that a country in a position of primacy will want to maintain it, and the Bush Doctrine prescribes as realism predicts. As for the *desirability* of U.S. primacy, neorealists are unusually divided. Waltz and some others assume that any state with primacy will provoke balancing and is likely to become domineering to boot.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, Mearsheimer emphasizes that America's oceanic separation from other great powers makes any U.S. territorial ambitions implausible and thus makes America both objectively and subjectively less threatening to others. Neoconservatives share this last characterization, but trace it to domestic U.S. sources of benevolence such as democracy.

The result is that neoconservatives differ with those neorealists who see the U.S. as broadly interchangeable with other great powers in history, while converging with other neorealists who characterize the U.S. role in the world not merely as unusually benevolent by historical standards but even pacifying in its broadest brushstrokes. Specifically, both these camps have argued that the United States plays a broadly pacifying role by (1) maintaining "offshore" support for allied states in northeast Asia and Western Europe, deterring bids for regional hegemony there, and (2) merely being so relatively powerful, since other major states do not bother to compete for primacy, avoiding arms races and other potentially destabilizing aspects of active rivalry.<sup>60</sup> Parallel claims can be made about America's stabilizing and progressive role in the world economy. The neoconservative assumption is not that other states will bandwagon with the United States out of a desire to share in its loot. It is that other status quo states have nothing to fear from America and thus have no incentive to balance against it but instead have many reasons to cooperate in the crafting of mutually beneficial interstate peace and growing world trade.

The Bush Doctrine's stance on international institutions has similarly scant disagreements with neorealists, though sharp ones with liberal-institutionalists. Most noticeably, the Doctrine is not beholden to the notion that international cooperation is desirable in and of itself. This is visible in the Bush administration's disregard for the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto climate accord, and other treaties. This is probably related to the fact that the Doctrine shares neorealists' skepticism that international institutions and treaties can reliably deliver security, not only because these entities logically depend on the uncertain compliance of signatory states but also because of the ample empirical record of noncompliance and lackadaisical enforcement.<sup>61</sup> In

this, the Doctrine and neorealism are consistent with a great deal of U.S. foreign policy history. In Gaddis' succinct conclusion, evidence of a "unilateralist 'turn'" after the Cold War and after 9/11 "reflects a return to an old position, not the emergence of a new one."<sup>62</sup>

As with neorealists, however, the Doctrine's strategy is nonetheless to seek allies for many initiatives, even if the resulting coalitions fall short of worldwide or even all-Western unanimity.<sup>63</sup> Thus Bush's America remains active in such institutions as the Organization of American States, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations and its affiliates, and durable alliances, especially NATO. Since 9/11 the Bush administration has launched two new security-related international organizations, the Proliferation and Container Security Initiatives. Its policies toward North Korea, Iran, Libya, and Syria (especially regarding Lebanon) have been consistently multilateral. In matters of trade, America arguably has remained more consistently "multilateralist" than many of its European allies.<sup>64</sup> It is not a reach, despite the skepticism of some, for Keir Lieber and Robert Lieber to say that the 2002 NSS "is clear about the necessity and benefits of multilateral cooperation, especially with other great powers."<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps the neoconservative position is most distinctive concerning two implications of U.S. primacy and international cooperation. First, unlike most neorealists, neoconservatives frequently detect in U.S. primacy a concurrent responsibility to intervene in humanitarian crises, especially genocides. But, to a degree many liberal-institutionalists are not, they have been willing to intervene with force and multilaterally if possible but unilaterally if necessary, especially when international institutions seem ineffective.<sup>66</sup> Second, many neoconservatives share realists' preference to approach rising China with caution and deterrence. But this may largely be because China is nondemocratic; were that to change, neoconservatives might converge with "liberal optimists" on this subject.<sup>67</sup>

### **Democratization**

In one way more than any other, the Bush Doctrine strategy and the neoconservative thinking it is said to instantiate are distinct from other major approaches to U.S. foreign policy. Neorealism assumes that security threats emanate from particular distributions of power, and mutual fears about those distributions, in the case of "security dilemma" thinking within neorealism. A state can largely address such threats by engaging in balancing behavior: mobilizing military resources, seeking allies, and offering assurances that it does not harbor aggressive agendas, in the case of security dilemmas. As a result, neorealism offers a country only two avenues for addressing threats of war: either changing the objective balance of power (through a military buildup or alliance-formation) or offering a fearful adversary assurances that you do not harbor aggressive intentions.

Balance-of-threat realism brings into the equation variation in other states' intentions, and a major variant of it traces that variation to the other states' domestic regime types. This adds an additional possible avenue for addressing a security threat: a country can seek to alter the domestic politics of adversary states. As we have seen, the United States pursued just such a strategy in World War II and the Cold War. The Bush Doctrine, by tracing both interstate and terrorist threats to nondemocratic regimes, identifies an even more ambitious transformative agenda of this kind: Western security through global democratization.

The democratic-peace thesis inspired the Clinton administration to talk about "democratic enlargement." That thesis and especially the post-9/11 authoritarian-radicalization thesis inspired the Bush administration actively to pursue that goal. The 2002 NSS seeks "modern government, especially in the Muslim world" to undermine the "fertile ground" that exists for "the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism."<sup>68</sup> Critics and defenders have debated to what extent this project is feasible or reckless.<sup>69</sup> It is worth noting that the Bush administration has not pursued the strategy single-mindedly. It rhetorically champions the causes of pro-democratic dissidents, has dramatically increased the National Endowment for Democracy's budget, and has supported democratic initiatives in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and former Soviet republics. But it has used force only in two countries and works closely in the war on terror with nondemocratic regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan.

What is more controversial about the democratization strategy is the reasoning underpinning it, which concerns comparative politics more than international relations. The strategy poses two questions concerning feasibility and efficacy: Does democratic practice effectively diminish violent anti-Western intentions? And can stable democracy be induced in all settings? Democratization is a pressing national security strategy if nondemocratic regimes are determined to be an important generator of aggressive state behavior and an incubator of terrorists. Simply put, the record is mixed. Regarding interstate security, it is true that the greatest twentieth century security threats to Western democracies have been nondemocratic states like Nazi Germany and the Soviet empire. But many nondemocratic regimes have also been durable allies, including those in NATO. It is symbolic that the United States shared demilitarized borders through most of the twentieth century with both democratic Canada and authoritarian Mexico. As for threats from nonstate actors, the majority of al-Qaeda rank-and-file come from nondemocratic states, and many authoritarian regimes have a record of provoking extremist opposition. But many nondemocratic regimes, including many in majority-Muslim central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, have produced little extremism.

In sum, the democratic-peace thesis suggests at most that nondemocratic regimes are *more* likely to be interstate threats than democracies are, not that

many of either category are. And for now, the authoritarian-radicalization thesis lacks the level of empirical support enjoyed by the democratic-peace thesis.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps nondemocratic regimes are a necessary but not sufficient condition for generating security threats: while not all nondemocracies pose threats, only nondemocracies do so. One option then is to focus security concerns on some subset of nondemocratic regimes. Another is the blunt but potentially effective instrument of gradual, global democratization. This seems to be the long-term strategy of the Bush Doctrine. In the words of the 2006 NSS, the “advance of freedom and human dignity through democracy is the long-term solution to the transnational terrorism of today.”<sup>71</sup>

Is this feasible? Realists are often portrayed as skeptics, though it is worth noting that realist assumptions offer no theoretical grounds for any particular stand on this subject; realism assumes nationalism, not authoritarian predilections. The record is mixed on this score, too. Democracy has flourished in previously hostile contexts such as post-1945 Japan and Germany. And events in Iraq could have a “contagion” effect on other countries, as Bush envisions.<sup>72</sup> But democracy has also serially failed in many countries, including in several European cases pre-1945. This suggests that certain structural conditions are required for democracy to stabilize, even if not the cultural ones that were once the focus of research and despair. External assistance might best be targeted at encouraging propitious conditions for democracy.<sup>73</sup>

### Does the Bush Doctrine Have Staying Power?

This chapter has argued that Bush Doctrine neoconservatism is a variant of realism, specifically balance-of-threat realism, characterized by the supplementary assumption that nondemocratic regimes generate interstate, and incubate nonstate, threats to Western democracies in general and America in particular. In these ways, the strategy outlined by the Doctrine is better understood not as a radical departure from modern U.S. foreign policy, which is substantially realist in nature, but as an adaptation of that tradition to the novel circumstances of the post-9/11 world. For example, the supposedly radical innovation of preventive use of force can, and I think should, be understood not as a rejection of deterrence but simply as a supplementary tool intended for very narrow circumstances in which deterrence might be prone to fail at great cost.

This point has one important implication. If the core elements of the Bush Doctrine are not the precarious product of a single foreign policy team, they are likely to endure under successor administrations. Observers should expect wholesale abandonment only if they conceive of the Doctrine in caricatured terms, for example as allergic to all international cooperation and bent on a policy of constant preventive war (or even “periodic preventive wars”).<sup>74</sup> Such a strategy would be unsustainable. But that does not accurately represent the Doctrine. We can consider sustainability regarding the preventive use of force,

periodically “narrow” coalitions of the willing, threat assessment, and democratization. The point of the analysis below is not that each of these elements is likely to remain unaltered after the Bush administration, only that their broad features are unlikely to be abandoned.

There is little evidence that any U.S. government is likely to renounce the option of *preemptive* force as a supplement to America’s durable reliance on deterrence, though it might return discussion of that option to a classified annex of its National Security Strategy.<sup>75</sup> Clinton certainly did not renounce this option when president. And in the 2004 presidential campaign, the Democratic party platform promised action if an attack with WMDs “appears imminent” (that is, before it materializes) and John Kerry pointedly retained the “right to preempt in any way necessary to protect” the U.S.<sup>76</sup> It is a distinct question whether future administrations would exercise the *preventive* option. Incoming U.S. governments of both parties may well be chastened by how difficult Iraq proved. Many now conclude that further preventive use of force is highly unlikely.

But substantial evidence suggests otherwise. Both of America’s major political parties, and for that matter, the European Union, have identified as their top security priority to ensure that terrorists do not acquire WMDs—a task that is entirely preventive in nature.<sup>77</sup> The Bush team is not unique in doubting whether all adversaries can effectively be deterred.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, what appears most chastening about Iraq has been the experience of the U.S.-U.K. project *after* the original military strike, a project of political reconstitution that is not a necessary feature of a preventive attack on WMDs. This may explain the striking fact that even amidst problems in Iraq, Americans (and Europeans) have been calmly discussing the pros and cons of preventive military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities. And it is suggestive that the two U.S. politicians leading in public opinion polls for the 2008 presidential race, Hillary Clinton and John McCain, both continue to insist that the preventive action against Iraq was appropriate. There is a good case to be made that the idea of the limited preventive use of force has been mainstreamed rather than made anathema.<sup>79</sup>

Future U.S. governments are especially unlikely to abandon the Bush Doctrine’s emphasis on maintaining U.S. primacy, either by deliberately squandering the U.S. lead in mobilized military resources or by ending a policy of seeking to deflect China, the most plausible peer competitor in coming decades, from achieving military parity with America. The Doctrine’s “unilateralism” is more likely to be contested, but quite possibly rhetorically more than operationally. Alongside the U.S.’s extensive ongoing engagements in international institutions, several Bush policies have been most heatedly discussed on this matter: relations with Europe; the Kyoto Protocol, Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and other treaties; and the willingness to use force without UN Security Council approval. On each count, a Democratic

administration is likely to act more multilaterally than a Republican one. But as Stephen Walt notes, post-Cold War diplomatic relations between America and Europe began to fray in the 1990s, not after 2001.<sup>80</sup> America under Clinton joined a Kosovo operation that lacked UN approval. Both Democrats and Republicans under Clinton made clear they would not ratify the Kyoto climate change treaty. Leading Democrats even now do not call for Kyoto's implementation nor for restoration of the ABM Treaty. Leading Democratic foreign policy intellectuals discuss multilateralism, but at the same time champion U.S. primacy, describe the UN as frequently ineffectual, and support aggressive anti-WMD policies.<sup>81</sup> The debates between these thinkers and many conservatives are not distinctions without a difference. But they are differences of degree and not of kind. Certainly mainstream U.S. Democratic approaches do not approximate the principled and strict multilateralism to which many European social democrats are at least rhetorically committed.

Is it regarding democratization that change is most likely after Bush? Are future U.S. governments likely to trace threats to nondemocratic regimes? The Clinton administration called for "democratic enlargement"; the 2004 Democratic platform argued that "Americans will be safer in a world of democracies"; and John Kerry broadly endorsed the notion that lack of democracy and political reform are among the root causes "breeding this virulent new form of anti-American terrorism."<sup>82</sup> But this has not been translated into a comparable emphasis in policy making. Democratic "enlargement" was not a major priority under Clinton. And since the Iraq invasion, Democrats have not emphasized democratization to nearly the same degree as Bush.

This caution regarding democratization may be traced not to issues of efficacy but of feasibility. Realists are not the only observers who have concluded that the creation of stable democracies, however desirable, is a complex process, many of whose moving parts are unknown to us, at least for now.<sup>83</sup> Iraq and Afghanistan have been humbling not only because recalcitrant armed adversaries have proven difficult to defeat but also because it has proven difficult to create effective democratic processes on whose durability we are ready to rely. On the one hand, the Bush administration has continued to champion democratization in many other countries. On the other, time has not noticeably diminished the Bush administration's willingness to work with many nondemocratic regimes, including a post-WMD Libya. It is too soon to know if this reflects a realistic sense of democratization's plausible pace or a grudging conclusion that nondemocratic regimes are pervasive, both historically and today, for complicated reasons. Perhaps America will seek more regime change through socioeconomic change, as it has been crossing its fingers will occur in China. The rigorous assumption that nondemocratic regimes are the source of security threats, both interstate and substate, is the most "radical" departure of the Bush Doctrine from preexisting thinking about international relations. It may be unsur-

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<http://kerry.senate.gov/low/record.cfm?id=189831>

prising that it is on this score that the Doctrine looks most vulnerable. But this only brings into sharp relief the durability of its other major features.

## NOTES

1. Fred Barnes, *Rebel-in-Chief* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006), 54. Vice President Dick Cheney has said that the “Bush Doctrine asserts that states supporting terrorists, or providing sanctuary for terrorists, will be deemed just as guilty of crimes as the terrorists themselves”; see “Vice President’s Remarks at the U.S. Military Academy Commencement,” May 31, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030531-7.html>.  
In his January 2006 speech at Kansas State University, President Bush three times referred to the “doctrine” that “if you harbor a terrorist, you’re equally as guilty as the terrorists”; see “President Discusses Global War on Terror at Kansas State University,” January 23, 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060123-4.html>.
2. Ivo Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 15; Peter Dombrowski and Rodger A. Payne, “Global Debate and the Limits of the Bush Doctrine,” *International Studies Perspective* 4 (2003): 395-408.
3. Robert Jervis, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine,” *Political Science Quarterly* 118 (2003): 365-88, 365; Robert Lieber, *The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 43-44.
4. The National Security Strategy, of the United States, September 17, 2002, p. 4, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdfpassim>; hereafter, 2002 NSS. George W. Bush, “President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point,” June 1, 2002, [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html). George W. Bush, “President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East,” November 6, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>. The National Security Strategy of the United States, March 16, 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>; hereafter, 2006 NSS.
5. Charles Krauthammer remarks that “the Bush Doctrine is, essentially, a synonym for neoconservative foreign policy” in “The Neoconservative Convergence,” *Commentary* (July-August 2005): 22. Neoconservatism diverges sharply from constructivist theorizing in international relations, but that analytic approach for now plays no prominent role in policy debates and is not discussed here.
6. For a basic definition of realism, see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 17-18.
7. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
8. John Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19 (Winter 1994/95): 5-49.
9. John Mearsheimer, “Conversation with John Mearsheimer,” interviewed by Harry Kreisler, April 8 p://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people2/Mearsheimer/mearsheimer-con5.html.

10. Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).
11. See, for example, John Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
12. G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: Norton, 2005).
13. There is a substantial academic literature identifiable as neoconservative. Analysis fruitfully focuses on such works as Lieber, *The American Era*; William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75/4 (July-August 1996); and other works discussed below.
14. Kenneth Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Relations: A Response to My Critics," in ed. Robert Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 329.
15. It is worth observing that populations and especially levels of wealth can also fluctuate substantially across time.
16. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, chapters 3-4.
17. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 3.
18. In the economic and decision-theoretic tradition, "risk" refers to an event with a known probability of occurrence (as in a game of chance) and "uncertainty" to one with no quantified probability. But many studies emphasize the difference between uncertainty as a total unknown and uncertainty as, in effect, ranges of unquantified likelihood such as "highly unlikely" or "very likely," ranges that seem to inform a great deal of real-world decision making. For two applied examples, see Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001) and Gerard Alexander, *The Sources of Democratic Consolidation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).
19. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*; Stephen Walt, "Revolution and War," *World Politics* 44 (April 1992): 321-368.
20. This section draws on Gerard Alexander, "The Authoritarian Illusion," *National Interest* (Fall 2004): 79-83.
21. Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary* (November, 1979), <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/60882a.htm>.
22. For a different interpretation of the deeper roots, see Michael C. Williams, "What Is the National Interest? The Neoconservative Challenge in IR Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 11 (2005): 307-37.
23. Alexander, "The Authoritarian Illusion," 80.
24. Some states also deliberately encourage terrorist activity. See Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
25. George W. Bush, "President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," November 6, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>.
26. George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 20, 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040120-7.html>.
27. David C. Hendrickson and Robert W. Tucker, "The Freedom Crusade," *The National Interest* 81 (Fall 2005): 12-13.
28. Condoleezza Rice, "The Promise of Democratic Peace," *Washington Post*, December 11, 2005, B7.

29. Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 125.
30. Ivo Daalder and James M. Lindsay's contributions to "Brookings Forum: Brookings Scholars Evaluate and Analyze President's National Security Strategy Paper," <http://www.brook.edu/comm/events/20021004.pdf>.
31. 2002 NSS, 14-15; 2006 NSS, 8; italics added. In these discussions, "deterrence" often includes compellence and other strategies.
32. Condoleezza Rice, "Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses President's National Security Strategy," October 1, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html>. Long before 9/11, Kristol and Kagan took pains to note that "[d]uring the Cold War, the strategies of deterrence and containment worked... well" in "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," 22.
33. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "The National Military Strategy of the United States of America," 2004, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050318nms.pdf>.
34. Richard Betts, *Surprise Attack* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1982), 95. See also, John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
35. As the Bush administration also pointed out, Iraq had not definitively resolved the 1990-1991 war and continued to fire at allied planes patrolling agreed-to no-fly zones.
36. For recent discussions, see Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004) and Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
37. Some streams of realist thought also trace conflicts to security dilemmas that spiral sufficiently.
38. Charles Krauthammer, "Democratic Realism: An American Foreign Policy for a Unipolar World," Irving Kristol Lecture at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, February 10, 2004 [emphasis in original], [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.19912,filter.all/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.19912,filter.all/pub_detail.asp). The issue of uncertainty over the origins of an attack might pose a new dilemma for preventive action: If a state doesn't know who to use force against after an attack, how can it possibly know who to use force against *before* one? The answer has been made simpler by the fact that only a small number of rogue states possess the programs of greatest concern: advanced nuclear programs. Eliminating them, alongside securing former Soviet weapons, might deny all terrorists such weapons.
39. For example, see John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy* 137 (January-February 2003): 58.
40. For one partial discussion, see Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," *International Security* 30 (Winter 2005-06): 87-123.
41. Interview with Owen Harries, "On Prudence and Restraint in Foreign Policy," *Policy* 18 (Autumn 2002): 32, available through <http://www.policymagazine.com>.
42. Nikita Khrushchev may have been the most risk-tolerant Soviet leader.
43. Robert Lieber, "Are Realists Realistic About Foreign Policy?" Paper prepared for delivery at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, August 2003.

44. Kenneth Pollack, *The Threatening Storm* (New York: Random House, 2002), 248-271; Mearsheimer and Walt, "Unnecessary War."
45. U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie is said to have assured Saddam Hussein in 1990 that the U.S. would not resist his invasion of Kuwait. But even if true, how often have rulers launched major wars on the unconfirmed assurance of a single diplomat? Robert Jervis reviews the various possibilities that Hussein refused to capitulate in 2002-2003 (for instance by permitting absolutely unrestricted inspections) because he was afraid of loss of face among Iraqis, of assassination attempts by Americans, or of possible invasion by an Iran no longer deterred by his alleged WMDs; or because he suspected the U.S. was irrevocably bent on his overthrow regardless; or because he doubted the U.S. would ultimately attack, even though most observers did not. But in all these cases save the last, Hussein would have been taking a massive risk of losing power in a direct military confrontation with the coalition in order to avoid what seem like smaller risks that he *might* lose power. The last scenario suggests he was ill-informed in ways that made his decisions objectively high-risk anyway. See Robert Jervis, "Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot Be Sustained," *Political Science Quarterly* 120 (Fall 2005): 364, 366-367. And even if Saddam faced domestic challenges to his regime in 1980 and 1990 that might fruitfully be addressed through successful war making, why was Hussein confident his wars *would* be successful? And what domestic risk to his regime could have justified the foreign risk he (again unsuccessfully) ran in 2003? See F. Gregory Gause III, "Iraq's Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990," *Middle East Journal* 56 (Winter 2002): 47-70.
46. George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," September 20, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.
47. For a brief discussion of some of these issues, see Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terror* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 210-15.
48. Arguably, the 2003 invasion of Iraq might have constituted just such a display of resolve. Another might be admitting Israel into NATO. On Chirac, see Ariane Bernard, "Chirac Hints at Nuclear Reply to State-Supported Terrorism," January 20, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/international/europe/20france.html>.
49. Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993): 44-79.
50. Walt, *Taming American Power*; Robert Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States," *International Security* 30 (Summer 2005): 7-45.
51. I thank Stanley Renshon for raising this subject.
52. Keir Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back," *International Security* 30 (Summer 2005): 109-139; William Wohlforth and Stephen Brooks, "Hard Times for Soft Balancing," *International Security* 30 (Summer 2005): 72-108.
53. Francis Fukuyama, "The Neoconservative Moment," *National Interest* 74 (Summer 2004): 66.
54. 2002 NSS, 13.
55. Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Relations," 327.
56. John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," *Foreign Policy* 133 (November-December 2002): 52.

57. Bush, "President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point."
58. Gaddis, *Surprise, Security*, 86.
59. Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
60. William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24 (1999): 23-28; Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 377, 379-380; Kristol and Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy."
61. For neorealist skepticism, see Mearsheimer, "False Promise"; and Randall Schweller, "The Problem of International Order Revisited: A Review Essay," *International Security* 26/1 (Summer 2001).
62. Gaddis, *Surprise, Security*, 26.
63. Then again, given the willingness of many Western liberals to use force with substantially less than global unanimity, the policy debate seems to be not whether "coalitions of the willing" are appropriate, but what number of "willing" is sufficient to endow legitimacy. For a prominent example of such willingness (regarding Kosovo), see Robert Kagan, "America's Crisis of Legitimacy," *Foreign Affairs* 83 (March-April 2004): 73-79.
64. A point made by Francis Fukuyama, "Does the 'West' Still Exist?" in *Beyond Paradise and Power*, ed. Tod Lindberg (New York: Routledge, 2004).
65. Keir Lieber and Robert Lieber, "The Bush National Security Strategy," *U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda* 7/4 (December 2002), <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/1202/ijpe/pj7-4lieber.htm>.
66. For example, William Kristol and Vance Serchuk, "End the Genocide Now," *Washington Post*, September 22, 2004, A31, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A40121-2004Sep21.html>.
67. Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security* 30 (Fall 2005): 7-45.
68. 2002 NSS, 6.
69. Defenders insist its ambitiousness should not be exaggerated in either pace or extent. For example, Krauthammer, "The Neoconservative Convergence," 25; and Norman Podhoretz's contribution to "The Bush Doctrine: What the President Said and What It Means," Heritage Foundation Lecture #881, June 2, 2005, <http://www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/hl881.cfm>.
70. Alexander, "The Authoritarian Illusion"; F. Gregory Gause III, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" *Foreign Affairs* (September-October 2005): 62-76.
71. 2006 NSS, 11.
72. For example, George W. Bush, "President's Remarks on Iraq from the Rose Garden," April 15, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/04/20030415-10.html>.
73. Gerard Alexander, "Making Democracy Stick," *Policy Review* (December 2005-January 2006): 45-57.
74. Francis Fukuyama, "After Neoconservatism," *New York Times*, February 19, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/magazine/neo.html>.
75. The 2006 NSS insists that the "place of preemption...remains the same"; 23.

76. The 2004 Democratic National Platform for America, "Strong at Home, Respected in the World," July 27, 2004, 6, <http://www.democrats.org/pdfs/2004platform.pdf>; Kerry spoke during one of the presidential debates, Commission on Presidential Debates, "The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate," September 30, 2004, <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004a.html>.
77. For example, see the 2004 Democratic Platform, "Strong at Home, Respected in the World," 6; the Republican counterpart, 2004 Republican Platform, "A Safer World and a More Hopeful America," August 26, 2004, <http://www.gop.com/media/2004platform.pdf>; and the Council of the European Union, European Security Strategy, "A Secure Europe in a Better World," December 12, 2003, <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.
78. As late as September 2002, former Vice President Al Gore believed that Saddam Hussein's search for WMDs "has proven impossible to completely deter, and we should assume that it will continue for as long as Saddam is in power." See "Text: Gore Assails Bush's Iraq Policy," speech before the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, September 23, 2003, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/transcripts/gore\\_text092302.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/transcripts/gore_text092302.html).
79. For example, see James Steinberg, "The Use of Preventive Force as an Element of US National Strategy," a Working Paper of the Princeton Project on National Security, [http://www.wws.princeton.edu/ppns/papers/Steinberg\\_Preemption.pdf](http://www.wws.princeton.edu/ppns/papers/Steinberg_Preemption.pdf).
80. Stephen M. Walt, "The Ties that Fray: Why Europe and America Are Approaching a Parting of the Ways," *The National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998-99): 3-11.
81. For example, Progressive Policy Institute, "Progressive Internationalism: A Democratic National Security Strategy," October 31, 2003, [http://www.ppionline.org/documents/Progressive\\_Internationalism\\_1003.pdf](http://www.ppionline.org/documents/Progressive_Internationalism_1003.pdf). See also, Joshua Micah Marshall, "Kerry Faces the World," *Atlantic Monthly* (July/August 2004): 108-14.
82. 2004 Democratic Platform, "Strong at Home, Respected in the World," 7; <http://kerry.Senate.gov/low/record.cfm?id=189931>.
83. Neo-conservatives are not immune; see Francis Fukuyama's contribution to "Defending and Advancing Freedom: A Symposium," *Commentary* (November 2005): 30.