



Who is Running US Foreign Policy?

Soeren Kern *

Theme: US President George W. Bush has selected the key members of his second-term foreign policy team

Summary: The new line-up suggests that hawks have consolidated their hold on power and will dominate the US foreign policymaking machinery during the next four years. Indeed, Bush has retained in the National Security Council and the Department of Defense almost all of the hard-liners who drove policy on Iraq during the past four years. Moreover, military spending in 2005 will reach US\$500 billion, a sum roughly equivalent to three-quarters of Spain's total GDP. And, after taking his second oath of office on 20 January, in his inaugural address Bush outlined an epic new vision for US foreign policy, 'with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world'. Although economic and military constraints will compel a less ambitious undertaking, there will be no fundamental shift in the central direction of US foreign policy during the next four years.

Analysis: *Who is Up and Who is Down?*

US foreign policy during the first Bush term was shaped by ideologues and strategists from three major schools of thought: realism, neo-conservatism and assertive nationalism.

Realists believe in a narrow definition of the national interest. They argue that foreign policy objectives should be limited to dealing with direct threats to national security and the maintenance of American economic interests. To achieve this, realists hold that the key aim of US foreign policy should be to foster international stability, which can be maintained only through a proper balance of power. Indeed, they aim for a world balance that is stable and functions on the basis of predictable alliances. Realists also believe that the internal character of a sovereign state is strictly its own affair, and that only the actions it takes beyond its own borders are the business of any other state. Realists are not afraid to use military force, but they argue that such force is justified only in repelling another state's aggressive behaviour to upset a previously stable balance of power. Realists believe that war for the sake of 'regime change' is misguided. Moreover, they believe that the US cannot compel others to become more democratic. Prior to 9/11, realists (who are also called traditional conservatives) represented the single most influential school of thought in US foreign policy.

Neo-conservatives, by contrast, believe in a broad definition of the national interest. They argue that foreign policy is about more than stability or geopolitics. Neo-conservatives (who are sometimes also called 'idealists', 'moralists', 'muscular Wilsonians' and/or 'democratic imperialists') are more willing than realists to commit American military power to such causes as the spread of democracy and human rights around the world. While realists argue that US foreign policy should be directed at containing problems and accepting the necessity of autocratic governments in some nations, neo-conservatives believe that a central goal of American policy should be one of 'creative destruction' to change the regimes (not just the policies) of hostile countries. Although neo-conservatives

* *Senior Analyst, United States and Transatlantic Dialogue, Elcano Royal Institute*

are in the tradition of Woodrow Wilson in their concern about the export of democracy, they do not share Wilson's faith in international institutions; they believe that going it alone is much more efficient. In fact, some neo-conservatives believe America unilaterally should use its overwhelming military, economic and political power to remake the Middle East in its own image, and that doing so will serve the interests of other countries as well as those of the United States. Since 9/11, neo-conservatives have been the driving intellectual force behind US policymaking on Iraq and the greater Middle East.

Assertive nationalists, meanwhile, are committed to US global leadership and to preventing the rise of a counterweight (including Europe) to American dominance. They know that power will be exercised by someone and rally around a grand strategy of US world supremacy built on the foundation of unchallenged military power in order to maintain a Pax Americana. Assertive nationalists are dismissive towards soft power, which they believe lacks political credibility if it is not backed up by hard power. Indeed, they argue that military power makes credible all other sources of power, which is why they favour major increases in the US defence budget. Although assertive nationalists believe in flexing American military power to defeat threats to US national security, they differ from neo-conservatives in their deep scepticism of nation-building and remaking the world in America's image. And even though assertive nationalists sometimes play lip service to Wilsonian principles, in practice they view spreading democracy as being beyond America's obligations and unlikely to work. After 9/11, assertive nationalists engineered the Bush revolution in US foreign policy, which reserves the right to wage preventive war as articulated in the seminal 2002 National Security Strategy.

During his first term, Bush sought to finesse the internecine philosophical squabbles among advisors within his administration from these three schools of thought. (He has written off the liberal internationalist school.) Realists, for example, had the dominant influence on US foreign policy when it came to China, Pakistan, Russia and Saudi Arabia. But neo-conservatives and assertive nationalists (jointly known also as 'hawks') were the main drivers of regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following the end of major military hostilities, however, the hawks became split over ambitious plans by neo-conservatives for remaking the Middle East. (Indeed, establishing democracy was not the rationale for the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.) The conflicts resulting from these internal ideological battles contributed to some of the difficulties in discerning the direction of US national security policy.

During his second term, Bush has signalled that he intends to bring more harmony to his foreign policy agenda by emphasising loyalty over ideology. Indeed, the president has placed White House loyalists to head the main components of national security policymaking. But which direction will Bush drive US foreign policy during the next four years?

In his inaugural and State of the Union addresses, the president sounded like the neo-conservative-in-chief as he defined an extraordinarily ambitious foreign policy agenda for the nation. But behind the sweeping rhetoric lie economic and military constraints that may compel more realism. Indeed, some analysts believe the president used his two speeches as an attempt to establish a balance of power between hawks and realists. By saying that 'the survival of liberty in our own land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands', Bush linked the neo-conservative goal of spreading democracy to the realist objective of enhancing national security. When Bush said that 'America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one', the president in effect said that the policy of the hawks would lead to the goal of the realists.

Ten People Who will Influence US Foreign Policy in the Next Four Years

President George W. Bush

In his first foreign policy speech, delivered in November 1999, Bush declared that 'a president must be a clear-eyed realist'. And during a campaign debate with then Vice President Al Gore in October 2000, Bush said: 'I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building'. Moreover, Bush claimed he would have a 'humble foreign policy'. But 9/11 was a transformative moment, and Bush responded by declaring a revolutionary change in the rules of the international game.

In his January 2002 State of the Union speech, Bush labelled Iraq, Iran and North Korea part of an 'axis of evil'. By March 2003 his concept of unilateral pre-emption had become a living, breathing reality when US troops invaded Iraq. And in January 2005 Bush said: 'It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture'.

In a January 2005 article in *Foreign Affairs*, Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis describes the emerging Bush Doctrine as 'free-market thinking applied to geopolitics: that just as the removal of economic constraints allows the pursuit of self-interest automatically to advance a collective interest, so the breaking up of an old international order would encourage a new one to emerge, more or less spontaneously, based on a universal desire for security, prosperity and liberty'.

But the post-war experience in Iraq has underscored the difficulties in promoting political change in other countries. Indeed, some prominent realists have mocked the idea that Iraq will be democratic anytime soon. One conservative commentator quipped that 'Iraq is just three people away from democratic success. Unfortunately, the three are George Washington, James Madison and John Marshall'. In a sign that there might be a second-term shift towards a more gradualist approach, Bush conceded that the promotion of democracy is a 'generational' obligation that requires patience and long-term commitment.

In any case, the course for Bush's second term will remain unchanged from that of his first: it will continue to be based on the premise of shaping, rather than reacting to, the rest of the world.

Natan Sharansky

Sharansky is a neo-conservative. He is also a hawkish Israeli cabinet minister and the author of an important new book titled *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror*. This book is the inspiration for the new vision for US foreign policy that Bush unveiled in his 20 January inaugural speech. Indeed, a plainspoken Bush said: 'If you want a glimpse of how I think about foreign policy, read Natan Sharansky's book'.

Sharansky's central thesis is that democratic change leads to peace. 'While the mechanics of democracy make democracies inherently peaceful, the mechanics of tyrannies make non-democracies inherently belligerent', he writes. Sharansky says that international relations should be based on a moral clarity that distinguishes between 'free societies' and 'societies of fear'. According to Sharansky, a former Soviet dissident, tyrannical countries export violence, war and terror in order to strengthen their control at home, while democracies do not wage war against each other. Thus, it is important to spread democracy and bring down totalitarian regimes everywhere, including the Arab world. Sharansky's book strikes at the heart of the argument over American foreign policy between idealists who believe in spreading freedom, and realists who seek stability and prefer alliances with strong rulers.

Bush's views on democracy are not just rhetorical. 'I felt this book just confirmed what I believe. That thinking, that's part of my presidential DNA', Bush said. At the very least, Bush's promise 'to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture' will strengthen the hands of hardliners like Cheney and Rumsfeld who see no way around the use of military force against tyrannical regimes. This implies that the White House will continue to view the national interest as broadly conceived.

Vice President Richard Cheney

Cheney is an assertive nationalist. He is also a Bush loyalist. Indeed, as second-in-command, Cheney derives his power from his loyalty to the president. Often characterised as being the power behind the throne of the Bush administration, Cheney has been one of the most active and influential vice presidents in American history. As the main White House link between the Pentagon and the State Department, Cheney is the *de facto* national security advisor. He is also one of the chief architects of the Bush Doctrine.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Cheney (then Secretary of Defense for President George H.W. Bush) sought to formulate an answer to the new realities imposed by the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This resulted in a classified document known as a Defence Planning Guidance (DPG). Drafted by then Under Secretary of Defence for Policy Paul Wolfowitz, the central thesis of the 1992 DPG was: 'Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival'. But controversy erupted after the DPG was leaked to the press, and Bush did not act on it in the waning days of his presidency. Under Bill Clinton, who entered the White House in January 1993, the US national security posture continued to be that of containment, as it had been since 1947.

Although containment and deterrence were employed effectively against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, 9/11 convinced Cheney of the limitations to these strategies when dealing with terrorist organisations. Indeed, in early 2002, the White House began to articulate the contours of an aggressive new national security strategy based on a dusted off version of the 1992 DPG. Its main premise is that the United States should reshape the international strategic environment, including the right to act alone through pre-emptive means when necessary. This philosophy became official policy with the 2002 National Security Strategy document.

Of all the president's advisors, Cheney has consistently taken the most hard-line approach to the threat posed by terrorism. He believes the US must act against terrorists abroad before they strike at home, and he sees no way around the use of force or covert activity against tyrannical regimes. Because Iran is at the nexus of two of America's main national security concerns –terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction– Cheney is uncompromising toward Tehran. And if the US directly links Syria –which together with Iran has for decades been accused of state-sponsored terrorism– to the 14 February assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, Cheney's message to Damascus will be clear: 'You are next'.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Rumsfeld is an assertive nationalist. He shares the same strategic vision as Cheney: a single-minded focus on the importance of American military supremacy, and deep scepticism about accommodations with other countries. Rumsfeld is ideologically suspicious of further European integration, which he believes is motivated by a desire to thwart US hegemony. Indeed, Rumsfeld and Cheney are opposed to Europe's increasing ambitions on the world stage and are determined to complicate the construction of the EU's common foreign and security policy. This largely explains why the White House refuses to support European diplomatic efforts *vis-à-vis* Iran, which lack credibility without

American involvement. Rumsfeld and Cheney believe that EU failure on Iran will further highlight the trans-Atlantic asymmetry in military and political power, and expose the limits to European soft power. For this reason, Rumsfeld and other administration hawks are also opposed to Germany having a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

At the 2005 Munich Conference on Security Policy on 12 February, Rumsfeld brushed aside a proposal by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder for Europe to have more clout in trans-Atlantic policymaking. Instead, Rumsfeld, who coined the term 'the mission defines the coalition' ahead of the US-led war on Iraq, made clear that this principle was still very much at the centre of US security thinking. Rumsfeld reiterated his preference to work with a few favoured nations in Europe. He said that future conflicts will be managed by ad-hoc coalitions, rather than by NATO because as a large, slow-moving institution it was sometimes of limited use in facing fast-moving threats.

Prior to 9/11, Rumsfeld was busy overhauling America's huge and conservative military establishment to meet the new threats of the 21st century –and to keep the US armed forces by far the strongest in the world– a key Bush campaign pledge in 2000. An essential element of his strategy was realigning US military doctrine by substantially reducing Cold War-era ground forces, and replacing them with smaller, more flexible fighting units that could be quickly deployed around the world.

Indeed, Rumsfeld said the US\$500 billion defence budget for fiscal year 2006 reflects efforts to transform the military into a more agile, lethal and expeditionary force. The central element of military restructuring would reshape US forces to put less emphasis on waging conventional warfare and more on dealing with insurgency, terrorist networks, failed states and other non-traditional threats. This evolution in strategy would shift financial resources away from major weapons programmes such as fighter jets and aircraft carriers towards recruitment of more elite special forces tailored to gather intelligence and fight terrorism.

Many neo-conservatives have clashed with Rumsfeld because his failure to install enough troops on the ground after the invasion of Iraq has dealt a severe blow to the viability of their plan to democratise the Middle East. Indeed, Rumsfeld and Cheney have little interest in either long-term deployments of large numbers of troops or nation-building. But the fact that Bush invited Rumsfeld to remain in the cabinet (Rumsfeld offered twice to resign) implies that he retains the confidence of the president and remains firmly in charge of the Pentagon.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz

Wolfowitz is a neo-conservative purist. He is also a policy intellectual. In fact, neo-conservatives have been able to dominate the US foreign policy agenda thanks to their intellectual heft. Whereas realists approach foreign policy by thinking case-by-case, Wolfowitz and other neo-conservative gurus have successfully outflanked them by articulating a highly coherent, hawkish worldview that, among other things, calls into question the traditional limits of sovereignty. Wolfowitz believes that sovereignty entails an obligation not to support terrorism, and that if a government fails to meet this obligation, it forfeits some of the normal advantages of sovereignty, including the right to be left alone inside its territory. In the wake of 9/11, Wolfowitz vowed not only that the US would pursue terrorists, but 'end' states sponsoring or harbouring militants. Indeed, the 2002 National Security Strategy document puts failed states and hostile regimes on notice that although they may be recognised as sovereign by the United Nations and therefore ostensibly protected from attack by its charter, they will nevertheless answer to American justice.

Wolfowitz also believes that the US should actively deter nations from 'aspiring to a larger regional or global role'. This explains why Wolfowitz is sceptical about reaching

accommodation with the EU in particular. Indeed, he believes that Europe's refusal to recognise its own limits on the global stage harms US national security because its lack of military clout forces European governments to slouch towards the lowest common denominator on many issues that involve US interests. Because this breeds EU inaction, Wolfowitz believes that traditional alliances should be replaced by ad-hoc coalitions. In December 2004, he said: 'There are European countries that are prepared to work more closely with us than others. And I don't think we should necessarily go with the lowest common denominator in Europe. If you want to make the kinds of changes that I think are necessary, you're not going to get them done if you are too deferential to the lowest common denominator'.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Rice is a Bush loyalist. Due to her close relationship to Bush as national security advisor, at the State Department Rice will have a direct line to the White House. But her loyalty to the president also means that she will be unwilling to confront Cheney and Rumsfeld. This implies that although Rice is promising a new era of diplomacy, she will not bring strategic change to US foreign policy.

Before 9/11, Rice was a realist. In January 2000, as then candidate-Bush's chief foreign policy adviser, Rice spelled out in an article in *Foreign Affairs* what a Bush foreign policy would look like. The proper central concern of the United States was 'power politics, great powers and power balances', she wrote. In the wake of 9/11, however, she moved closer to Cheney's hawkish position of a more dominant American role in the world. She said 'I think September 11th was one of those great earthquakes that clarify and sharpen. Events are in much sharper relief'. Indeed, the historic quality of 9/11 was 'a shifting of tectonic plates in international politics. It was important to try to seize on that and position American interests and institutions and all of that before they harden again', she said. As a result, Rice moved philosophically closer to the hawks.

But Rice remains an enigma. As an architect of Bush's hard-line foreign policy during his first term (she helped draft the 2002 National Security Strategy), she has sided with the assertive nationalists. But she also identifies with the neo-conservative worldview: 'There cannot be an absence of moral content in American foreign policy. Europeans giggle at this, but we are not European, we are American, and we have different principles', she said. And she exhibited realism during her trip to Europe, when she said: 'The time for diplomacy is now'. Indeed, Rice's testimony at her confirmation hearings indicates that she subscribes to the neo-conservative vision of transforming the Middle East, but with more emphasis on dialogue with US allies. 'Our interaction with the rest of the world must be a conversation, not a monologue', Rice said.

Despite her conciliatory public pronouncements that Europe matters and the US respects it, trans-Atlantic differences on Iran, Iraq and China are deep and Rice is unlikely to be able to resolve them. Indeed, the underlying message of her 8 February speech in Paris is that Europe should accept the American invitation to support US grand strategy. This implies that apart from an improvement in tone, there will few if any modifications to US foreign policy. A trans-Atlantic rapprochement, therefore, seems unlikely during the second Bush term.

Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick

Zoellick is a Bush loyalist. He is also an experienced diplomat and an astute dealmaker who is committed to US global hegemony.

Rice handpicked Zoellick to be her deputy, a job that entails making sure that the vast State Department bureaucracy faithfully implements White House policies. Some hawks fear that Zoellick, who has a reputation for being a balance-of-power realist, might work

behind the scenes to undercut the president's efforts to pursue the war against terror aggressively. But his supporters say one of Zoellick's most important attributes is his loyalty to the presidents he has served. In any case, his ultimate success will depend upon how well he gets along with Cheney and Rumsfeld, two strong-willed players who are more seasoned than Zoellick or Rice.

Zoellick's reputation for being a realist stems from his role in securing the re-unification of Germany during the George H.W. Bush administration in October 1990. But Zoellick is more of a clearheaded hawk than he is often given credit for. In 1998, for example, he joined a group of foreign policy hard-liners in sending a letter to President Bill Clinton warning that if Saddam Hussein were to 'acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will be put at hazard'. The signers urged Clinton to make it the aim of American foreign policy to 'remove Saddam Hussein and his regime from power'.

Moreover, Zoellick was one of the first Bush associates to introduce the concept of 'evil' into the construct of Bush's foreign policy. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 2000, Zoellick argued that: 'Finally, a modern Republican foreign policy recognizes that there is still evil in the world—people who hate America and the ideas for which it stands. The United States must remain vigilant and have the strength to defeat its enemies'.

Zoellick had been widely touted as the front-runner to succeed James Wolfensohn as the next president of the World Bank. But by leaving the Cabinet-level position of trade representative to serve as Rice's deputy, Zoellick opted to take a career step down. This set off a firestorm of speculation around Washington that he may in fact be tipped to replace Rice in the not too distant future. Rice's name is already being widely circulated as the heavyweight challenger the Republicans need to topple Democratic Senator Diane Feinstein in California when she comes up for re-election next year. Rice has strong California roots, and in addition to the traditional Republican base in that state, she could contest Feinstein strongly for the female as well as the African-American vote.

National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley

Hadley is a neo-conservative. He also is a Cheney loyalist. After four years as deputy national security adviser, he replaces Rice as the chief advisor to the president on national security issues. Hadley formed part of a loosely constituted group of foreign policy advisers known as the Vulcans who counselled candidate Bush in 2000, and were at the core of the presidential transition team following Bush's election victory.

Hadley contributed to a report titled *Rationale and Requirements for US Nuclear Forces and Arms Control*, which served as a blueprint for the January 2002 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). The NPR provides a framework for formulating a US nuclear strategy for the post-Cold War world. Among other issues, it advocates the preventive use of 'bunker-busting' nuclear weapons to rid rogue nations of any weapons of mass destruction, such as stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons. As a precursor to the 2002 National Security Strategy, the NPR states: 'Under certain circumstances very severe nuclear threats may be needed to deter any of these potential adversaries'.

The power and role of the national security advisor varies from administration to administration. Critics faulted Rice during the first term for failing to coordinate the sometimes fractious views of Cheney, Rumsfeld and Powell. But like Rice, Hadley is unlikely to stray from the preferences of Cheney and Rumsfeld. Indeed, the self-effacing Hadley said that he believes that policy must be rooted in the president's values, not in

the endless bargaining of interagency debate. This implies that he will faithfully support the administration's national security policies.

Deputy National Security Advisor Elliot Abrams

Abrams is a neo-conservative. As deputy national security adviser he will coordinate the White House strategy for advancing democracy in the Middle East. Often called the 'neo-con's neo-con', Abrams is one of the administration's strongest and most consistent advocates of American strength and the expansion of freedom worldwide.

Like other neo-conservatives, he believes that the US and Israel share common national security concerns in the Middle East. A political intellectual, Abrams has long sought to strengthen the bond between the Judeo-Christian moral tradition and the public debate over domestic and foreign policy. As Abrams becomes the leading administration architect of Middle East policy during the second Bush administration, US policy towards the region will continue to be guided by neo-conservative notions about the centrality of Israel. 'Strengthening Israel, our major ally in the region, should be the central core of US Middle East policy, and we should not permit the establishment of a Palestinian state that does not explicitly uphold US policy in the region', Abrams says. US interests 'do not lie in strengthening Palestinians at the expense of Israelis, abandoning our overall policy of supporting the expansion of democracy and human rights, or subordinating all other political and security goals to the success of the Arab-Israel peace process', he says.

Indeed, Europeans hoping for a more assertive US diplomacy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the second Bush administration are likely to be disappointed. In January 2005, for example, Rice assured leaders of the major national Jewish American organisations that the US government would not back away from its previous commitments to Israeli security. Rice said that US talks with European governments in November 2004 did not signify that Bush was backtracking in his support for Israel as part of a 'price' to improve US-European relations. 'I hope that everyone understands by now that you don't extract a price from this president', Rice said.

Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte

Negroponte is a Bush loyalist. He is also one of the most powerful and experienced diplomats in the country. As the government's first director of national intelligence (DNI), Negroponte will be the principal advisor to the president on intelligence matters. His mission is to coordinate 15 highly competitive spy agencies in what will be the broadest restructuring of the nation's intelligence services since the US espionage laws were written in 1947.

For decades high-level commissions have proposed creating a single, powerful director to oversee the entire intelligence community. But the idea did not gain momentum until it was recommended by the national commission that investigated 9/11, which exposed deep flaws within an old intelligence structure stuck in a Cold War mentality. The new post is intended to prevent a repetition of the intelligence failures that preceded 9/11 and led to overstatements regarding Saddam Hussein's weapons programmes. Indeed, the DNI will be charged with reorganising the country's vast intelligence-collecting and analytic apparatus so as to place it at the cutting edge of the war on terrorism.

Negroponte has served every president since John F Kennedy and after more than 40 years in government, he understands the flows of power in Washington. This experience will be important in a job whose most immediate priorities will be to mediate bureaucratic turf wars between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Pentagon. In the new structure, Negroponte will have authority over the CIA, but his biggest challenge will be to demonstrate to Rumsfeld that it is the DNI that has the last word on intelligence matters.

The Pentagon consumes an estimated 80% of the \$40 billion a year intelligence budget, and Rumsfeld (a canny bureaucratic operator) is unhappy about the power the DNI might wield over military intelligence operations. But Negroponete has received the most important power a president can bestow, which is power over the budget. Indeed, Bush described the post in a way that emphasises its power: 'People who control the money, people who have access to the president generally have a lot of influence,' Bush said. 'And that's why John Negroponete is going to have a lot of influence.' This is a major step forward for US intelligence.

Conclusion: Bush has signalled that he aims to take full control of his national security bureaucracy. His second-term foreign team is one of the most ideologically coherent ever, and all of its members are intensely loyal to the president. This implies that although there may be some improvement in the style of American diplomacy, there will be no fundamental shift in strategic direction during the next four years.