

**From Realism to Liberalism:
George W. Bush's
Rhetorical Foreign Policy Transition,
1999–2004**

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This article examines international relations rhetoric rather than foreign policy practice. Between the time of his acceptance of the Republican presidential nomination in August 2000 and his reelection in November 2004, George W. Bush changed his rhetorical focus from “realist” to “liberal internationalist” in an effort to sell his foreign policy agenda. This shift is identified through an analysis of nine presidential speeches and one excerpt from a book Bush wrote prior to becoming president. By exploring Bush’s foreign policy pronouncements, the article reveals shifting patterns of presidential rhetoric and demonstrates the importance of studying presidential rhetoric in international relations theory.

Introduction

The election of Texas Governor George W. Bush to the White House in November of 2000 appeared to be the beginning of an administration that would focus primarily on domestic issues such as Social Security reform, improving education, and shrinking the size and cost of the federal government. It did not seem likely that foreign policy and international relations would ultimately become the focus of the incoming administration. The new president set out to pass his No Child Left Behind proposal as well as a series of tax cuts.

Only eight months after Bush’s inauguration, however, he faced a situation that ended any notion that his would be a presidency devoted simply to addressing domestic concerns. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on American soil redirected the focus not just of the Bush presidency, but of the entire United States government. Domestic policy debates soon turned to foreign policy debates. The Bush administration was now faced with planning a

counter-attack to the deadly actions of the terrorists and developing a long-term strategy to combat terrorism.

Foreign policy and international relations were not completely forgotten at either the opening of the Bush presidential campaign or in the early days of his presidency. Candidate Bush gave a variety of speeches to military and party organizations during the course of the campaign, many peppered with typical American presidential election chestnuts proclaiming the need to maintain America's strength, to build a more powerful military, and to raise pay for military personnel. Because of the problem of terrorism, however, Bush's foreign policy rhetoric eventually changed dramatically.

This article examines the rhetorical aspects of Bush's key foreign policy speeches and writings between the time of his nomination in September 2000 and his reelection in November 2004.¹ These materials were chosen not because of the policies they promote, but because of the nature of their political rhetoric. The Bush administration's rhetorical focus shifted from "realist"² to "liberal internationalist"³ during this period because it was engaged in a political marketing campaign to brand, package, and sell a foreign policy to the American people. Through the use of presidential rhetoric, the administration converted Bush from a Reaganesque realist to a neo-Wilsonian who relied upon the generalities of international institutions and the promotion of democracy to achieve a permission slip from the American people to expand the overall "War on Terror" to a separate battleground in Iraq under the guise of expanding democracy. The result was an internationalist liberal rhetorician in the White House and a new battle to make the Middle East a breeding ground for democracy. By tracing the transition from one school of international relations thought to another over a set period of time, the article highlights the modern realities of political marketing.

Framework

The Presidency and Political Rhetoric

The importance of presidential rhetoric in guiding and formulating public policy is immense. The verbal stimuli that come from the President of the United States are intriguing and significant to policy makers and rhetoricians solely because the

public responds when the president speaks about policy problems. This attention becomes increasingly important as technology advances, making access to the mass public even easier. Furthermore, the mass public, to a degree, is psychologically dependent upon the president, thus increasing the levels to which the public is receptive to a presidential message (Cohen 1995). Hence, an issue is elevated when it is on the president's agenda. His attention sends a signal to the public that the issue is of national importance.

Jeffrey Cohen (1995, 93) suggests that "people have been noted as being notoriously uninformed and uninterested in international affairs" unless a specific event has a tremendous impact on their lives. He believes that this lack of interest and attention is good news for a president, because he will be more likely to find success in framing a message in an area that is neither closely followed nor well understood by the public. Cohen also notes that presidential rhetoric is persuasive because of the prestige and position of the president. This means that scholars carefully watch the president's rhetoric because they are, according to rhetorician Mary Stuckey, "sensitive to the nuances of language and how it can be manipulated to produce certain results" (1996, 155).

In an era of instantaneous communication via the World Wide Web, 24 hour cable news, opinion polling, and around-the-clock attention to politics and politicians, the rhetorical process is accelerated tremendously (Gronbeck 1996). The lasting effect of this communication boom is that twentieth and 21st century presidents, unlike their 19th century counterparts, can go over the heads of Congress and take their appeals and policy rhetoric directly to the people. For example, Tulis (1996) cites Theodore Roosevelt's campaign to regulate the railroads, Woodrow Wilson's push to enter into the League of Nations, Franklin Roosevelt's fire-side chats, Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, and Ronald Reagan's 1981 tax reform and Strategic Defense Initiative. The 20th century has taught us that the rhetorical process is more important than ever since presidents may choose to use the various and increasingly fast-paced mediums of communication to their advantage when promoting a policy or a message. As John Kingdon has observed, "no other single actor in the political system has quite the capability of the president to set agendas in given policy areas for all who deal with those policies (Andrade and Young 1996, 202).

Political Marketing: Selling Candidates and Policy

Politics often defies conventional wisdom because in the political world words can speak louder than actions. The growing number of ways of communicating with the American public has helped to make political rhetoric a more powerful tool for building consensus for political messages, selling a candidate, or marketing a policy choice. Legendary House Speaker Thomas A. (“Tip”) O’Neill is credited for the aphorism that “All politics is local.” In the 21st century, it may be possible to state that “all politics is marketing,” and political rhetoric is the means by which political figures “sell” their political agendas. Lilleker and Lees-Marshment (2005, 1) suggest that the use of political marketing is a result of “qualitative and quantitative marketing research. Commercial techniques and strategy have permeated the political arena, in response to the rise of more critical, better educated and informed electorates.”

Nicholas O’Shaughnessy believes that rhetoric and communication within the political arena today are maximized through an increasing attempt to sell public policies through political marketing strategies. These marketing strategies are typically seen as being most effective when “selling” a candidate to the voting public. “The marketing concept is distinguished, above all, by the emphasis that is placed on consumer focus. Identifying the needs and wants of customers and fashioning the products and communications shaped by that understanding is the core of the marketing task” (O’Shaughnessy 1999, 728).

O’Shaughnessy distinguishes political marketing from political propaganda, with propaganda being moralistic and marketing being consumer-driven and research-defined. In other words, the contemporary political system is driven by market-tested, result-oriented research that can effectively help to “sell” a candidate or a policy proposal. This political marketing tells people what they wish to hear in a pleasing way. Propaganda differs because it attempts to enlighten people with what they ought to know. Hence, modern rhetorical political communication closely mirrors the political marketing model.

Defining Liberalism and Realism

Before addressing the presidential rhetoric of George W. Bush, it is necessary to define the “realist” and “liberal” schools of international relations theory. Following the “War to End All Wars,” international relations scholars saw a need to develop a theory to prescribe viable solutions to the international problems that lingered after the most brutal conflict the world had ever seen. The “utopian” school emerged to answer these concerns and dominated the landscape of international relations theory after World War I. Utopianism can best be described as a society with all good and no evil, perfect balance, complete knowledge, and the endless meeting of human needs without exertion (Will 2002). Utopian scholars and leaders concluded that war is not a part of human nature but an action based upon the mistakes and failures of politicians. Seeking a more perfect society, they made world peace and democracy their touchstone.

The realist school was founded as a reaction to ideas of the “utopians.” Realism has its roots in ancient Greek political thought as well as in Machiavellian theories and politics. Realist scholars such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau argued that because utopians were overly idealistic, they could not address seriously issues of power, conflict, and human nature. According to realist scholar John J. Mearsheimer, realism takes a vision of the international system sharply different from the utopian view. Realists share Mearsheimer’s view of survival as the primary motivational factor in international relations. Mearsheimer (1994–95, 9) states that the international arena is “a brutal area where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other, and therefore have little reason to trust each other.” Steven M. Walt (1997, 934) calls realism a “simple and powerful way to understand relations among political groups.”

Realists believe that although most people wish for a more harmonious world of shared interests, it is not acceptable to use this vision as a basis for international relations theory. Carr suggests that the utopian appeal to a “harmony of interests” between states is actually designed to uphold the status quo and reaffirm the power of the dominant states (Burchill 2001). Morgenthau (1972) outlines several principles of political realism, the most fundamental being

that nations have little incentive to adopt a policy unless doing so enhances a nation's power position.

By contrast, liberalism in international relations theory emphasizes institutions, order, and commerce as the backbone of international politics. This school of thought seeks to advance the ideals of peace and freedom via popular enlightenment, democratic government, and free markets for trade. Liberalism's roots can be traced back to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 and to John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* in 1859. While Smith focused on economic freedom, Mill stressed democratic institutions and the freedoms of speech and press. In defending liberalism, Mill argued that "the struggle between liberty and authority is the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history with which we are earliest familiar, particularly in that of Greece, Rome, and England. But in old times this contest was between subjects, or some classes of subjects, and the government. By liberty, was meant protection against the tyranny of political rulers" (Mill 1859, 5). Following in the footsteps of Smith and Mill, Michael W. Doyle (1986, 1152) argues that liberal states respect "individual freedom, political participation, private property, and equality of opportunity."

Another key element of liberal thought is institutionalism and the spread of democracy, as advocated by individuals such as Woodrow Wilson and personified by working bodies such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. Liberals believe that international institutions such as these can prevent the sort of death and devastation that occurred during the two World Wars. For example, Edward Morse (1970) contends that six characteristics befall modern societies: growth of knowledge, increased political centralization, politicization of the people, development of wealth, urbanization, and adaptation to change rather than the acceptance of the status quo. As a result, says John M. Owen (1994), the spread of liberal democracies promotes world peace because liberal democracies avoid conflict with one other and achieve a "harmony of interests" in the interest of self-preservation. Boyd A. Martin (1948, 295) sums up the essence of liberalism this way:

Liberalism has had many different meanings under different circumstances. At different times it has sought, for example, to protect the right to acquire property, to shield the

individual against tyranny, to establish the doctrine of inherent rights of men, to organize a world market, or to create individualism. In most instances, however, the needs of the time determine the role of liberalism.

This article thus treats liberalism in the context of commitment to institutionalism, an emphasis on free trade, the advance of democratic ideals, the rejection of tyranny, political participation, collective security, and the pursuit of a harmony of interests. It defines realism in the context of the pursuit of power, the defense of the national interest, focus on sovereignty and survival, and the theory of balance of power politics.

Findings

The underpinnings of George W. Bush's early realist-leaning viewpoints can be found in his 1999 book, *A Charge to Keep: My Journey to the White House*, a typical introductory volume released by a candidate prior to the start of a major campaign. Such books are designed to raise a candidate's name identification with voters well before the first round of party primaries and caucuses. *A Charge to Keep* focuses on candidate Bush's personal history, his family, and various initiatives that he developed as governor of Texas, in addition to presenting his positions on both domestic and international issues. The foreign policy section of the book contains a discussion of Bush's view of America's role in the world and the type of foreign policy that he would pursue if elected. Bush states that the quest for peace "requires tough realism in our dealings with China and Russia. It requires firmness with regimes like North Korea and Iraq, regimes that hate our values and resent our success. And the foundation of our peace is a strong, capable, and modern American military (Bush 1999, 239).

Candidate Bush's admitted realism may be comparable to what Hans Morgenthau (1972) refers to as a public official who discusses foreign policy in a manner that will allow the official to appeal to the popular opinions of the public in order to gain political support. Morgenthau's reaction to a politician appealing to the opinions of the voting public would likely prompt him to reject today's political

marketing model, a concept that will be discussed later in this article. The proposed Bush policy appears to advocate “peace through strength,” a slogan that has helped candidates with the electorate since at least the time of Richard Nixon’s landslide defeat of Senator George McGovern in 1972. Political posturing aside, the candidate’s rhetorical commitment to a realist foreign policy also reflects the realism advocated by John Mearsheimer, who argues that “great powers seek to maximize security by maximizing their relative power (Walt 1997, 993).

A second example of candidate Bush’s foreign policy rhetoric further reveals his commitment to realist principles. In his presidential nomination acceptance speech, delivered in Philadelphia on August 3, 2000, Bush declares:

We will give our military the means to keep the peace, and we will give it one thing more... a commander-in-chief who respects our men and women in uniform, and a commander-in-chief who earns their respect. . . . A generation shaped by Vietnam must remember the lessons of Vietnam. . . . When America uses force in the world, the cause must be just, the goal must be clear, and the victory must be overwhelming. . . . I will work to reduce nuclear weapons and nuclear tension in the world—to turn these years of influence into decades of peace. . . . And, at the earliest possible date, my administration will deploy missile defenses to guard against attack and blackmail. . . . Now is the time, not to defend outdated treaties, but to defend the American people. A time of prosperity is a test of vision. And our nation today needs vision.” (Bush 2000)

Bush’s attack on treaties, a vital component of the liberal institutionalism advanced by liberal scholars and post-World War I utopians, is very much in sync with the realist scholarship of thinkers like Charles Krauthammer. Krauthammer states that

treaties were the cornerstone of foreign policy during the Clinton years. Bush appears to echo Krauthammer's belief that treaties are nothing more than "parchment that is either useless or worse than useless" (1999, 24). Aside from using the opportunity to launch a political attack on the outgoing Clinton administration, Bush asserts his interest in developing a missile defense system and in ensuring an overwhelming victory if American force is deployed on his watch. Furthermore, his statements on defense and foreign policy cited above are among the few to be found in the acceptance speech, which consists mostly of partisan pronouncements on a plethora of social and economic issues, along with the patriotic swooning that is a typical part of such speeches.

Another aspect of this particular address reflecting a realist rhetorical position is the candidate's lack of specificity. For instance, which treaties does he deem to be outdated? What is an "overwhelming" victory? What vision is being tested? Realist scholars have a tendency to avoid using specific language, and they are often quick to see ordinary citizens are nonpolitical beings who view foreign policy as remote. Therefore, foreign policy realists who hold office and make policy are likely to address these issues ambiguously (see Harriot 1993).

A third example of realist international theory dominating Bush's rhetoric came in his Inaugural Address, given on January 20, 2001. Emphasizing his belief in a global balance of power favoring countries that share the vision of the United States, Bush said:

Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and war, when defending common dangers defined our common good. Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to the future generations. (Bush 2001a)

He went on to say:

We will build our defenses beyond challenge,
lest weakness invite challenge. . . . We will

confront weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors. . . . The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. (Bush 2001a)

Bush's acknowledgement of a "balance of power that shapes freedom" is consistent with the most significant portions of realist doctrine as promoted by E.H. Carr who claimed that states pursue power vis-à-vis their own national interests and that disputes over national interests are unavoidable. Carr believed that the "only way to minimize such clashes, and therefore the incidence of war, was to ensure that a rough balance of power existed" within the international system (Burchill 2001, 75).

Charles Krauthammer's realist notion that treaties and international agreements are "useless or worse than useless" finds support in Bush's Oval Office. The President's realist rhetoric was clearly on display on May 1, 2001, in his "Remarks to Students and Faculty at National Defense University." Bush began the speech by focusing on the historical aspects of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that shaped the Cold War. Bush then declared that the United States would soon seek the abrogation of the 1972 ABM Treaty. "We need a new framework that allows us to build missile defenses to counter the different threats of today's world," he said. "To do so, we must move beyond the constraints of the 30 year old ABM Treaty" (Bush 2001b). "This treaty does not recognize the present, or point us to the future," Bush continued. "It enshrines the past. No treaty that prevents us from addressing today's threats, that prohibits us from pursuing promising technology to defend ourselves, our friends, our allies is in our interests or the interests of world peace" (Bush 2001b). Realists like Morgenthau may not have agreed with a rhetorical policy statement of this nature. However, the realist school recognizes that Bush would be justified in cancelling the ABM Treaty if it hindered American interests. Morgenthau believed very strongly that "national interest should be the central concept of international relations theory" (Algozaibi 1965, 225.)

At this point, the overarching policy of the Bush administration turned away from realism and toward liberal institutionalism. This evolution in Bush's rhetoric can be seen in his first State of the Union Address delivered on January 29, 2002, one year after his inaugural pledge to "build defenses beyond challenge" and watch the balance of power. Rather than talking tough against other powers in the world, as he had done in his pre-election rhetoric, Bush called for unity against a common danger—terrorism—by erasing "old rivalries." In his 1999 book, Bush had cited the "tough realism" that would be needed to deal with China and Russia. Now, he indicated that "America is working with Russia and China and India, in ways we have never before, to achieve peace and prosperity" (Bush 2002b). He went on to say that "in every region, free markets and free trade and free societies are proving their power to lift lives. Together with friends and allies from Europe to Asia, and Africa to Latin America, we will demonstrate that the forces of terror cannot stop the momentum of freedom" (Bush 2002b).

Perhaps the most obvious sign that Bush's rhetoric had shifted away from realism and toward liberalism came during his "Graduation Speech at West Point," delivered on June 1, 2002. Bush discussed the concept of fighting for a "just peace," a cause that he claimed had always been central to America's belief system. In order to build this peace, Bush suggested that America build alliances with other "great powers" in order to allow for open societies across the globe (Bush 2002a). The West Point speech also contained a rejection of the realist principles of containment and deterrence. Bush claimed that "new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles" (Bush 2002a). He advocated preemptive action as a form of deterrence and also discussed transforming America's military into a leaner, more rapidly responsive instrument for striking at an enemy. With his discussion of preemptive military action, Bush seemed about to make a turn back to the realist rhetorical camp. Before this turn could be made, though, Bush veered sharply back into the liberal rhetorical camp by stating: "Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or

impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities” (Bush 2002a).

In continuing defiance of the realist camp, Bush picked up the theme of morality. “Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place. Targeting innocent civilians for murder is always and everywhere wrong. Brutality against women is always and everywhere wrong. There can be no neutrality between justice and cruelty, between the innocent and the guilty. We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name” (Bush 2002a). Bush also lapsed into a neo-Wilsonianism that denies the inevitability of war and emphasizes the common values that unite “the great powers” of the world. He even called for the worldwide elimination of poverty and repression. Although Bush had cited earlier a need to strike preemptively at perceived threats, he certainly did not advocate a unilateral approach to striking at “evil” in the world. In fact, he rejected unilateralism and embraces coalition-building: “We must build strong and great power relations when times are good; to help manage crisis when times are bad. America needs partners to preserve the peace, and we will work with every nation that shares this noble goal” (Bush 2002a).

The West Point speech not only moved Bush’s foreign policy rhetoric completely out of the realist school of thought, but it also drove the nails into the casket of realist-based rhetoric from his administration. Morgenthau says “the realist is not indifferent to morality. He believes, however, that universal moral principles cannot be realized, but at best approximated” (Algozaibi 1965, 227). Morgenthau also claims that realism “refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe” (Algozaibi 1965, 227). He argues further that “the fundamental error that has thwarted American foreign policy in thought and action is the antithesis of national interest and moral principles. The equation of political moralizing with morality and political realism is itself untenable” (Morgenthau 1951, 33).

Writing in the fall of 1946, Percy Bidwell of the Council for Foreign Relations attempted to place into perspective the new world that had been forged by the Second World War. He skeptically analyzed the competing schools of international relations theory: the realist school and what he deemed to be the “idealist” camp

(later revealed to be the liberal school). Bidwell noted that “idealists” speak in terms of Wilson and the Atlantic Charter and lean heavily on the future of the United Nations. Meanwhile, realists contend that “the only objective of American policy worth considering is national security” (Bidwell 1946, 480). He stated that President Truman, vis-à-vis the Atlantic Charter, spoke in terms of democracy being good for all citizens of the world. “If democracy is good for the United States, he [Truman] argues, it must be equally good for the Romanians and the Argentineans” (Bidwell 1946, 482). Bidwell rejected such thinking, which realists would contend was as applicable to Harry Truman in 1946 as it was to George W. Bush in 2002: “Americans who hold these views are rarely troubled by political difficulties. They do not stop to consider how much they themselves have profited from the traditions of self-government reaching back to the Magna Carta... nor do they remind themselves that democratic institutions in the United States, even after a hundred and fifty years of experience, are still far from perfect” (Bidwell 1946, 482).

Fast forward to eight months later and combine Bush’s West Point statement with his “Address to the American Enterprise Institute,” given on February 26, 2003. This message is peppered with references to a need to prevent citizens of the free world from living in fear, while rattling the saber against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Bush invoked many benefits to a free Iraq, including stability in the region and freedom for those living under Hussein’s tyranny. He also used the speech to advocate the expansion of democracy, stating:

There was a time when many said that the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong. Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken. The nation of Iraq—with its proud heritage, abundant resources and skilled and educated people—is fully capable of moving toward democracy and living in freedom. (Bush 2003b)

Bush concluded that “the world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed

the ideologies of murder. They encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life” (Bush 2003b).

The rhetoric displayed by President Bush in these two speeches denotes a remarkable shift in policy, verbiage, and vision. The shift from rhetorical realism to adoption of the type of democratization policy that liberal scholar John M. Owen (1994) called the “third pillar” of Clinton foreign policy is essential to understanding the Bush administration’s foreign policy. Owen asserts that democratization of nations throughout the world will lead to a democratic peace because of respect for the institutions, shared values, and ideology possessed by democratic states. His definition of liberalism is a recurring rhetorical point in several future Bush speeches. Owen defines liberal democracy as “a state that instantiates liberal ideas, one where liberalism is the dominant ideology, and citizens have leverage over war decisions (1994, 89).” He also links liberal democracy to freedom of speech, competitive elections, functional institutions, and the goal of preventing hostilities. These concepts echo throughout almost every policy speech given by Bush between September 11, 2001, and his reelection in November 2004.

The most illustrative example of Bush’s liberal international political rhetoric came in his address at Whitehall Palace in London on November 19, 2003. The presidential rhetoric in this speech is clearly liberal and highly optimistic about achieving a democratic peace; for Bush endorsed Morse’s understanding of modern society, and he embraced the core ideas of Owen and Mill. Throughout the speech, Bush rallied to the cause of promoting international institutions, vouching for the ability of free markets to achieve stability and provide encouragement for building democracy. Most significant, Bush openly attacked several important tenets of the realist school. Sounding like Mill and Smith, Bush said, “We believe in open societies ordered by moral conviction. We believe in private markets, humanized by compassionate government. We believe in economies that reward effort, communities to protect the weak, and the duty of nations to respect the dignity and the rights of all” (Bush 2003a).

The President emphasized the importance of institutions, another essential component of liberalism. “I believe in the international institutions and alliances that America helped to form and helps to lead,” he said. “The United States and Great Britain

have labored hard to help make the United Nations what it is supposed to be—an effective instrument of our collective security” (Bush 2003a). According to liberal scholars such as Michael W. Doyle (1983), liberal states are bound by shared values reflected in certain institutions. Bush’s endorsement of these institutions, which did not necessarily support the United States war effort in Iraq, is further confirmation of his shift from realist to liberal foreign policy rhetoric.

Bush also used the address to advance the idea of a democratic peace. The United States and Great Britain, he said, share a “commitment to the global expansion of democracy, and the hope and progress it brings, as the alternative to instability and hatred and terror” (Bush 2003a). Military power alone cannot bring about lasting security, he added, for “lasting peace is gained as justice and democracy advance” (Bush 2003a). Departing sharply from the realist rhetoric he invoked during his presidential campaign and in his Inaugural Address, Bush also argued that strengthening democratic institutions would not only increase the likelihood of peace, but would also help “fulfill moral duties” such as fighting disease, AIDS, and hunger (Bush 2003a).

Finally, the speech contained several outright jabs at the fundamental concepts of the realist school. In discussing the need to address the issues of famine, disease, and peace, Bush insisted that the United States and Great Britain “share a mission in the world beyond balance of power or the simple pursuit of interest” (Bush 2003a). Similarly, he justified the use of force by the democratic powers of the world to help dethrone tyrants. In yet another rebuff of realist rhetoric, Bush warned that in “some cases, the measured use of force is all that protects us from a chaotic world ruled by force” (Bush 2003a). This statement is a far cry from realist giant Kenneth Waltz’s theories of an anarchical world structure. (Waltz 1979) argues that the anarchical state of world affairs is natural, and that states must rely upon the doctrine of self-help to protect themselves. Bush’s rhetoric seems to reject this anarchical view of the international system, for he chides the “old elites, who time and time again had put their own self-interest above the interest of the people they claim to serve” (Bush 2003a).

One final speech that clearly indicates a rhetorical shift from realism to liberalism in presidential rhetoric is Bush’s “Address to the United Nations,” given on September 21, 2004. Bush again

rejected the core ideas of realist scholars. Dismissing the “balance of power” concept on the grounds that today there is no way to isolate a nation or hide from terror networks, Bush said: “In this young century, our world needs a new definition of security. Our security is not merely found in spheres of influence or some balance of power, the security of our world is found in the advancing rights of mankind” (Bush 2004a). In place of spheres of influence or a balance of power, Bush contended that the new definition of security should be established by laying the “foundations of democracy by instituting the rule of law and independent courts, a free press, political parties and trade unions” (Bush 2004a). This is certainly not the sort of agenda that would surface in the scholarship of Morgenthau, Waltz, Mearsheimer, or Krauthammer.

Conclusion

The transition from realism to liberalism in the foreign policy rhetoric of President George W. Bush from the time of his candidacy to the present is plain. As a presidential candidate, and in the early stages of his administration, Bush used an array of realist rhetoric. Eschewing treaty-based diplomacy, Bush instead endorsed maintaining a balance of power and serving narrow national interests. Within several months of his inauguration, Bush switched from a realist-driven rhetorical approach to a liberal-based approach when discussing international relations and foreign affairs. His major speeches emphasized democratization, fighting tyranny, seeking democratic peace, and promoting free trade as an instrument of institutional reform rather than as a tool of national interest. All these points represent a clear rejection of the realist doctrine. Robert Jervis (2003) claims that Bush’s focus is on the total remaking of international politics. He cites the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as a very important period of change for Bush. At the six month anniversary of the tragedy, Bush remarked that the world can address the issues facing civilization with unity and courage, a remark that Jervis notes is fully in line with progressive liberalism.

This study shows that the post-September 11 President Bush is a very different foreign policy rhetorician than the pre-September 11 President Bush. The Bush administration no longer is adhering

to a realist approach in foreign policy rhetoric. Peggy Noonan, a former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan and columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, also sees a shift in the President's political rhetoric. Following Bush's second inaugural address in January 2005, Noonan, a pure conservative realist, commented that Bush's speech reflected his "evolving thoughts on freedom in the world" (2005, 8). She noted further that the foreign policy battle today is fought between realists and moralists, with Bush siding "strongly with the moralists, which was not a surprise," given current events (Noonan 2005, 8). There are only two potential rhetorical routes for Bush to take. He could continue to proclaim freedom via trade, democratization, and open societies. Alternatively, as we drift away from the defining moments of his presidency—the September 2001 terrorist attacks and the war in Iraq—the rhetoric could swing back toward the balance of power language that dominated his pre-September 11 speeches. In light of this study's findings, it is likely that the rhetorical liberalism of President George W. Bush will continue.

The political marketing model would also predict that the pattern of rhetorical liberalism will continue. President Bush's rhetorical shift from realism to liberalism occurred because in foreign policy liberalism is a more marketable rhetorical product than is realism, especially when "selling" a wartime agenda. O'Shaughnessy (1999) suggests that political marketing is done through consumer-based, market research-oriented strategies. An examination of public opinion shows that the Bush administration was simply "selling" back policies that the American people already appeared to desire. In an April 2002 CBS News poll, 73% of Americans approved of U.S. military attacks against nations in which it believes terrorists are hiding. A December 2001 Newsweek poll found 48% of Americans favoring increased U.S. pressure on Middle Eastern nations to expand democracy despite the possibility of Islamic fundamentalists rising to power. Finally, an October 2001 Pew Research Center poll determined that 61% of Americans believed the nation should be "very much involved in solving international problems" (www.pollingreport.com).

Public opinion polls also indicate the strength of the Bush administration at the time of this rhetorical transition from realism to a marketing-friendly liberalism. An October 2001 CBS News/New York Times poll found that 88% of Americans approved

of the administration's handling of the September 11 terrorist attacks. The same percentage of respondents in an April 2002 CBS News poll approved of the nation's military operation in Afghanistan. Most striking is an April 2002 NBC News / Wall Street Journal poll in which 94% of respondents said the nation's war on terrorism had been successful (www.pollingreport.com). Clearly, there was potential for the administration to market and sell its policies, for consumers were already open to the product. Selling the policy rested with substituting liberal rhetoric for realist rhetoric.

Interestingly, the marketing model and the use of political rhetoric to "sell" a foreign policy agenda seem tailor-made for liberalism. Morgenthau, realism's heaviest hitter, warned in 1951 that "the mistaken identification of press, radio, polls, and Congress with public opinion has had a distorting as well as paralyzing influence upon American foreign policy. It has induced the government to pursue mistaken policies, which might not have been pursued but for a mistaken notion of what public opinion demanded" (1951, 232).

Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik (2001, 80) similarly suggest that "balance-of-power calculations are often trumped by imperatives rising from economic globalization, political democratization, particular belief systems, and the role of international law and institutions." This could be a direct result of the marketing approach to political rhetoric and policy. In emphasizing freedom, democracy, and institutions, liberalism is a more appealing product than the sometimes harsh and brutish realism, whose traits are more difficult to market to a public that, as Cohen (1995) suggests, is traditionally uninformed about and uninterested in foreign policy. From a marketing perspective, if people know little about a product, they are likely to buy it if it appeals to their emotions and values. Hence, liberalism is the more marketable product.

Legro and Moravcsik suggest that one reason the early Bush administration gravitated toward realism and not liberalism is that the administration "does indeed place a greater emphasis on accumulating and wielding military power. While the threat perception of the Bush team is based largely on ideology, it remains skeptical of strategy and tactics not closely linked to military dominance (2001, 81)." The attraction to realism is significant, they

argue, because of the two major pillars of early Bush administration policy: the Powell Doctrine and missile defense. After the events of September 11, the administration's rhetoric shifted from a realist emphasis upon accumulating military power to a liberal concern with moral truth, shared values, liberty, open societies, and achieving and preserving peace. As Bush said in his remarkably liberal speech at West Point, "When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations" (Bush 2002a).

The rhetorical record speaks for itself. President Bush the realist declared within the first five months of his administration that "I'm a straightforward person [and] represent my country's interests in a very straightforward way" (Legro, 2001, 81). He also spoke of backing out of international accords, ignoring treaties, adhering to the balance of power, and playing power politics. On the campaign trail three years later, Bush the realist was talking like Bush the liberal institutionalist:

To win the war on terror, America must work with allies and lead the world with clarity. And that is exactly what we are doing. The flags of 64 nations fly at U.S. Central Command Headquarters in Tampa, Florida, representing coalition countries that are working openly with us in the war on terror. Dozens more are helping quietly in important ways. Today, all 26 NATO nations have personnel either in Iraq, Afghanistan, or both. America's allies are standing with us in the war on terror, and we are grateful. (Bush 2004b)

Realism is a power-based theory that recognizes an occasionally brutal, yet ongoing competition for power. Liberalism, on the other hand, can be marketed as a values-based approach to international relations reflective of American idealism and the spread of democratic peace. Perhaps Boyd Martin (1948, 295) put it best: liberalism "accepts the contention that progress lies in the free exercise, so far as such freedom does no injury to others, of individual energy. To increase personal, civil, social, and economic liberty of the individual has been a major tenet of liberalism."

Liberalism fits into O'Shaughnessy's political marketing concept of determining the customers "latent wants, the underlying desires that they cannot articulate fully (1999, 728)." Rhetoric is the vehicle for tapping into the "latent wants" of the public, and for the Bush administration, international relations liberalism is the product of choice.

Notes

1. The speeches are: "Republican Party Nomination Acceptance Address" from August 3, 2000; "Inaugural Address" from January 20, 2001; "Remarks to Students and Faculty at National Defense University" from May 1, 2001; "State of the Union Address" from January 29, 2002; "Graduation Speech at West Point" from June 1, 2002; "Address to the American Enterprise Institute" from February 26, 2003; "Address on Iraq Policy at Whitehall Palace" in London from November 19, 2003; "Address to the United Nations" from September 19, 2004, and "Homeland Security and the Presidential Agenda" from October 18, 2004. The single writing is an excerpt from Bush (1999). No speeches were chosen from the time period directly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 because they were based upon emotional appeals and rhetoric as opposed to political appeals and foreign policy rhetoric. Nonetheless, the significance of that tragedy will not be ignored in this study.

2. The "realists" in international relations theory examined in this study are E.H. Carr, Charles Krauthammer, Hans Morgenthau, John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, and Kenneth Waltz.

3. The "liberal internationalists" in international relations theory examined in this study are Michael Doyle, Boyd A. Martin, John Stuart Mill, Edward Morse, and John M. Owen.

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