

# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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## POWER, TERROR, PEACE, AND WAR

AMERICA'S  
GRAND  
STRATEGY  
IN A WORLD  
AT RISK

WALTER  
RUSSELL  
MEAD

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD  
"Arresting... Mead is one  
of the country's  
finest thinkers about  
America's role in the world.  
... His reading dazzles."  
THE NEW YORK  
TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Award-winning author of *Special Providence*

### Teaching Notes

*Power, Terror, Peace, and War*

By **Walter Russell Mead**

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Vintage Books

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256 pages

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*Power, Terror, Peace and War* examines and assesses the Bush administration's grand strategy at a critical juncture in American history. This book is equally suited for:

- General courses on American foreign policy
- Advanced courses on the war on terror and America's involvement in Iraq
- Advanced courses on the theory and practice of international relations

*Power, Terror, Peace and War* will help students in introductory courses better grasp the broader strategic context of the Bush administration's strategy. In addition, it will underscore what did change, and no less importantly, what did not change in America's approach to the world in the wake of September 11th.

Students in upper-division courses can draw on Mead's incisive analysis to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Bush administration's prosecution of the war on terror. This work will also help advanced students to identify the way forward for American policymakers.

## General Courses on American Foreign Policy

### Discussion Questions

1. According to Mead, what distinguishes the varieties of power that the United States wields in its encounter with the world? Provide your own examples of sweet, sticky, sharp and hegemonic power.

2. What are the ideological underpinnings of George Bush's foreign policy? What are its historical roots and what does the future hold for this movement?
3. How has neoconservatism shaped the president's foreign policy?
4. Does the Bush administration's foreign policy mark a radical break in American diplomacy or is its approach to the world in keeping with enduring traditions of American foreign policy?
5. Mead dubs the emerging global economic order "millennial capitalism." What are its defining characteristics? How does the widespread perception of America as the engine of millennial capitalism impact American foreign policy.
6. How does America's distinctive social and economic model inform its foreign policy?
7. What are the salient parallels between America's effort to contain the spread of communism and the war on terrorism? How do the dynamics of this current conflict differ from the Cold War?
8. Describe the particular worldviews of the "Party of Heaven" and the "Party of Hell." By what means do they attempt to curb American power?
9. Trace the evolution of George Bush's strategic thinking from his candidacy to the present.
10. Evaluate the merits and drawbacks of the Bush administration's tendency toward unilateralism.

## **Advanced Courses on American Foreign Policy**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Has the Bush administration effectively struck a balance between the types of American power detailed by Mead? What variety has the administration overly emphasized? What dimension of power has been insufficiently brought to bear?
2. Mead observes that "Ironically, turning away from Europe may be the best way to build a better relationship with it. Europeans have overestimated the political price the United States will pay for their help." Has the Bush administration's sometimes brusque approach to trans-Atlantic ties weakened the alliance, or will the administration's frankness ultimately bolster the relationship?
3. Draft a report card for the Bush administration's foreign policy thus far. Assign letter grades and a rationale for the President's policies vis-à-vis Iraq, the broader Middle East, Asia, South America, Europe, Russia, and Africa.
4. Explain the paradox behind America's role as a "revolutionary conservative" in the world. How has the current administration tried to reconcile the tension between these conflicting impulses? Have they been successful? Why or why not?
5. What are the dangers inherent to America's role as guarantor of the global order? What can the Bush administration do to avoid these perils?
6. Mead describes two different animating ideas (the "Party of Heaven" and the "Party of Hell") that impel nations to oppose American power. Can these two worldviews collaborate to form a durable counterweight to the United States? Is there already evidence of a coalition geared toward balancing against Washington?

7. Contrast the underlying philosophy, decision-making process and implementation of the Bush administration's foreign policy with his post-Cold War predecessors. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the respective administrations?
8. Why has the Bush administration only selectively worked with multilateral institutions? Has the administrations a la carte multilateralism been effective? Why or why not?

### **Debate Topics**

1. Has the Bush administration's foreign policy, on balance, served to make America safer?
2. Mead ends his account of post-9/11 American foreign policy on a cautiously sanguine note. Have recent events borne out his optimism? Why or why not?
3. Mead contends that neither multilateral institutions (e.g. the United Nations) nor allies (e.g. France, Germany) can expect to wield veto-power on American foreign policy decisions. How much influence should international institutions or allies have on American foreign policy decisions?
4. Has the Bush administration's transformation of foreign policy been a revolution in the substance, or merely style of America's approach to the world?
5. Mead argues that Bush's foreign policy has been strategically sound, but tactically wanting. Are the weaknesses of the Bush administration's foreign policy simply a matter of tactics and presentation, or is the President's worldview fundamentally unsustainable?

### **Op-Eds**

Assign your students to write an op-ed succinctly arguing a position on a particular policy of the Bush administration. The standard to meet is importance of the topic, clarity in presenting a specific point of view, and brevity (650-750 words). Because the op-ed is short, it requires different writing skills from a conventional term paper—the point must be made within the first or second paragraph, the writing style is usually more argumentative than in term papers, and the writing must be simple even as the ideas advanced are sophisticated. Students will need help in focusing the argument—which is best done before writing—because most students choose arguments that are either too sprawling or esoteric for good op-eds. Circulate half a dozen examples of good op-eds to give students a template to emulate.